

THE
MORNING'S
WAR

C.E.MONTAGUE



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A ROMANCE

BY
C. E. MONTAGUE

"This battle fares like to the morning's war,
When dying clouds contend with growing light."
Third Part of *King Henry VI.*, Act ii. sc. 5.



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TO
M. M.

W. L. G. 1864

PROLOGUE

"Escape. A garden plant growing wild in the fields. A species thus continued, in a soil and climate strange to it, may in time exhibit remarkable changes in its characteristics."

Handbook of Botany.

IT may have looked less like a sowing of seed than a casting of some weed into the fire when Frank Browne, a sadly wild fellow, drained his last can in the London of 1610, fell asleep full of beautiful thoughts on a bench close to Ludgate and found, when next things came clear, that he was ascending a hill, wet with a fog that beaded his hair, in a light that could only be dawn, and he with a musket in hand, wondering what could have sent him soldiering. Had he been nabbed while he slept? Or was he there of his own motion, a Maccabee saving his country, urged by some vision that had visited his bench? It must have been this second way; he preferred it; and there were such calls; Joan of Arc might have had one, for all that they said; a lowly vessel, no doubt, but the hundred or so that marched with him now looked lowly too; if such stones were to head any corners at all it must be Heaven's, so clearly had this world's builders rejected them all. The nude has its glories, and clothes that cohere have theirs: here you saw neither, but a chill turpitude: mangy cats looked so; for the very fleas, in their shrinking coverts, the future must have a disquieting air. It was surely a call that had come.

What a thing, he mused, dozing again as he tramped up to Highgate, it is for a man to know what is what! Here was he, Fortune's confidant, feeling with her in her strange and right choice of tools, in her eye for effect, her humor; a fool, in his place, might now have been cracking a fool's jests—"Did powder not want its food dressed?" and that sort of stuff, whereas he—this it was to have breathed, though it were but unstudiously, Oxford's quick air; it gave your mind eyes. A sense of this great blessing glowed in Frank like some fire-lit corner, a warm nook to bask in and dream. Dream he did, till the hardest kick that his young life had sustained awoke him to see a sergeant bulging and bluish-red with wrath at a dreamer's musket dropped in the mud.

A kick may work fast on the generous mind: in an instant Frank had kicked back. But the mind can work faster yet on a kick: in less than that instant Frank's mind running out, still in dream, to the doors of the body to see who had knocked there so unkindly, had caught at that unexplained shock and spun it ligaments of meaning and cause, till, like a play's climax, the crash was led up to; Frank saw it as just the last term in the series of wise good turns that his race had done him since he was a boy, the Benjamin of a big house. He saw how his father had tried to teach him to carry his wine, as was kind, and had cut him adrift for carrying more, as was fair enough; and had put him to no trade—what trade could he sweat at, with his blood?—but gave him, instead, as much money as he could half live upon—for the heir of the house

must live too: Frank quite saw the justice of that—and how the orifice of the family door in Soho had long been narrowing to a slit proportioned inversely, quite justly, to that smell which Frank carried about him, on these suppliant calls, as of husks that swine do eat, till at last the door opened, for once, strangely wide, and a shape that he readily knew now for the good genius of his father's house crossed the hall—it neared him—*horribile visu*, it ran—was a running kick gathering momentum? He turned in flight; then he awoke, having dreamed not wholly untruly.

Not that his friends would have kicked him, before men. Their hearts would have bled to know that the world knew that in that nest of nests a bad egg could be laid. Yet Frank smelt to heaven: into the outer darkness he had to pack, one way or other, and if in a fog, it would become him. They did not feel this, however, just now, being indeed all asleep, and that not on their feet, like this wicked one, but supine, like the just. All the tribe, except Frank, had great heads; they would sit half the night drinking less than appeared with a fuddlesome prince, or enduring the manners of some boor or goose of a great man with places to give, or refraining from throwing the first or any subsequent stone at ladies whom kings delighted to honor; and, these dues to charity paid, they would sleep their ten hours apiece and look like good babies till their untroubled gray eyes opened and sought the sources of loaves and fishes again, as a child's seek the light.

A dog may have been whipped pretty tame by its owner and yet fly at the man who affronts that true god. Frank had reciprocated the sergeant's kick, not so much in wrath for himself—long tavern practice had made him a thought lax as a sentinel of his private honor—but lest the pure name of his house should take a stain if even its scapegoat, stumping off into the desert, accepted a kick *gratis* from a low man. But all sergeants do not draw these distinctions; so it was under arrest that Frank marched on from Highgate to prosecute his conquests. He grieved at this: he hated black looks; he classed them with unfilled cans. His way to be at peace with men was a stream's way with stones: when his devious flow brought him down on a large and hard one, he gave, rounded him, and wound on. By the time they had dipped down from Finchley to ford the bogged hollow beyond and climb to the houses capping Barnet Hill, Frank's spirit had broken already, good-humoredly, to get round this boulder-some sergeant.

From Barnet the posse of scarecrows dropped again to cross the wide scoop to Ridge Hill, and from Ridge Hill the abbey church of St. Albans was seen huge on its opposite height, its straight lines lifting out of the cumulus clouds of tree-top round it. That was their day's work, to reach St. Albans. It was a Sunday; nearly all day there was a ringing of bells, rising and falling as each village came to the marchers' feet and was passed, the peal behind them scarcely tinkling away into silence before they crossed the rim of the circle of music shaken out by the belfry that came next.

In his pleasures Frank was no bigot; he took any; failing good wine, and then bad, he would get drunk on things heard and seen. He swam luxuriously now in a sense of Sabbatical, pastoral peace suave to battered town ears. Bells stopped and a cock crowed; he heard it wonderfully far away. It cleared and the birds burst out together, singing grace after rain, and the bells went at it again, hill talking to hill about God—so Frank imaged it; he was a rapturous Christian for several hours; peace on earth was the thing, and goodwill to sergeants. As they trailed uphill in the dark into St. Albans, the two that had kicked at dawn were made one by exchange of intimate thoughts on the traits without which ale would scarcely be ale.

Monday would launch them on the ruled, horrible straightness of the Roman road north-westward, the brown mud whitening on their boots till they dragged balled heels out through the high nick in the chalk sky-line, past Dunstable, and washed the white off in the Hockley puddles. On Tuesday morning, no doubt, they would sweat and swear up the long slant to Brickhill, still topped to-day by the tiny court of assize that they saw, and let themselves down to the green floor wetted or, as books say, drained by the Ouse. And then the next day, and the next, and the next; one's vision dims as they go; they recede towards Chester and Ireland. From live men, of whom one would always spit on his hand where his musket slipped, and another at every halt would shift the rag on a raw toe, they sink into a "force" and Frank's self into a

"type," the common Reuben who, being unstable as water, and much averse from it, could not excel.

Yet this Reuben was to beget in the West a dynasty nearer to Levi's in function, and puissant enough in body to make meetly leonine sons for the lion's whelp, Judah. In the winter of 1887-8 a boat capsized on Lough Neagh and one of the two men drowned was a Father James Browne. They gave him a great funeral, to vex the Protestants. Eight Brownes, rods of the house of Frank, walked after the coffin, five of them priests and all the eight men of a fine bony structure, like hunting horses, six feet one or two apiece, and grand leapers and swimmers in youth, like the one now drowned, who had swum half a mile towards shore in his clothes, towing the boat by the painter, keel upwards, with two boatmen praying and wailing astride it, until the cold cramped the stout Father's muscles up into knots and he sank in the act of absolving the men horsed on the keel.

The eight sat up a long time that night, gabbing family history: even priests will, at a birth or funeral. One of the clan had been all but made head of Maynooth; that was a great thing. The grayest was made to retell how his father had told him in 1830 the way that *his* father was carried home dying in 1798 with his entrails exposed where the English had flogged him upon the abdomen. The others listened as Christians, about the year 100, might hear from an aged witness how Christ's eyes had turned this way and that on the Cross. And then the family manfully faced the black fact of "souper" Browne that went thrice to the

Protestant church in the old Penal days, to save the rich land that he had.

“ Ah, then, if the souper were all,” broke out Father John, a child of impulse; but even he checked at the look he got from the rest. Grief behind grief, shame beyond shame—if you probe far enough, in the very best houses you may attain the unmentionable.

Patrick, the big grazier from Banaghan, plunged, for escape, into talk of a great hope he had that the family name might not be Browne at all, nor anything English, but Brian itself. If one man would set foot in a Protestant church to keep a hold of his land, what would prevent another from stripping the very name off his own back, or putting an English look on it, to keep the life in him, God help him?

The seven strained hard to believe. No use; a savage honesty, that would have been looked on and let whole civilizations founder for want of a lie, compelled them. What hope could there be? For more than two hundred and sixty years there had been tenant Brownes on the books of Lord Dunster, beyond. And there was the tough old tradition of that English trooper ancestor; even his ring was here, on Father Horace's hand; broad gold with an oval engraved gem, Greco-Roman, some Renaissance find, it had worn thinner now on eight generations of little fingers, the only finger an Irish Browne could put into it—thinner, and yet, as evidence, it was still gross. They handed it round. Father Horace translated the words inscribed inside the gold band:—

" Francisco Browne, d.d. W.S. Londin. MDCVII."

Shakespeare himself might have given the thing to a young Oxford wit, or enjoyer of wit, wild for the playhouse.

They considered the letters. "London"—that was deadly. "Ach, they're cut to the depth of a ditch," Patrick said gloomily, handing it back to the head of the family. Wear it another hundred years and perhaps— The head of the family rubbed it round absently on his finger.

They sought comfort from figures. The Frank of the ring was said to have married some decent woman; their child would be half-Irish. That child's child, if again there were no misalliance, would be Irish three parts out of four; its child, again, would have only one-eighth of it English; the next, one-sixteenth. They themselves would be Irish at least to the length of a hundred and twenty-seven to one. Not a doubt, that was why Father John, the first time that ever he spoke the Gaelic, had felt that his tongue had not been a fit for his mouth till that day.

Part of their bodies' history stared out of them. All that was clay was glorious; muscles modeled in potent thongs that clenched and gave, gave and clenched, musingly flicking under clear skins on which the red lived and flitted; full eyes, bright and wild like a caught animal's; heads not stuck on stumps of thick poles, but lifted on swayed stems with the look that some flowers have of reaching up at the sun, with a pull on their moorings to earth. They walked like the

creatures of unjaded gait—blood horses, greyhounds, red deer and some athletes when young—in whom each step seems to be an inquisitive and shy caress offered to the ground, as if the feel of the earth, its mass and springiness, were a fresh marvel still.

The clay told of the pit from which it was dug. Earth-loving earth, you might figure them crumbling clods, from farms of their own, in affectionate hands, alone with the tilth and the straining life in themselves and the cutting leash of their Irish chastity. Some tricks of look might have been caught from fathers on whom the lines that old age found waiting for it to fix had been drawn and redrawn as they peered with half-closed eyes through the fog that ascends from steaming and slipping droves, or along the last furrow at twilight, or watched from under the drip of their eaves the day-long beat, beat of rain that lodged the year's oats or rotted the year's potatoes, their hearts still somberly filial to the soil that their minds cried out on: the niggard, the harridan, what did she do for a son?

So these eight felt, like their fathers; and after a while, if you heard them talk, you might see what it was that kept this bitter and disenchanted affection short of despair and disablement. They were all priests in a way; more so than most priests; they had cowls in their dispositions; they felt, with the positiveness of bodily sense, that to live was only to stand awhile in a lobby, with everything, that men could have come for, waiting beyond the next door. Gymnasts will pass from one swinging trapeze to another, high

in the air: so these Brownes seemed to have let go the common human idea—yours and mine, whatever we say—of life as a whole and round thing, to be lived out with a will; they had clutched at the thought of it all as no more than a blank hour's wait in the cold for a dawn. The new grip had swung them away from the old, through naked space, and now they felt safe while the grip held, but still redoubtably committed; it gone, they could see their way out of their minds. Black, beyond soupers, would any one be who loosened another's grasp; the mind had to search far for the likeness of that last baseness. Rats that the Dutch hunt to death lest they bore the hole that may flood a province? No. Rats are innocents; they do not know. Say, rather, a guard put in charge of a dike, who opens the sluices by night to drown out country and friends.

THE MORNING'S WAR

CHAPTER I

"But they—their day and night are one.
What is't to them that rivulets run,
Or what concern of theirs the sun?
It seems as though
Their business with these things were done
Ages ago."

WILLIAM WATSON.

INTO the lustrous peace that had hushed, one still afternoon in September, the westward-turned terrace of Roc-à-Voir Inn, high on a sunned alp of the Valais, there broke, as a boy's stone fractures the pensive and unaware glass of a pond, the news that some one was certainly coming uphill—might indeed reach the inn in two hours. A waiter's eye, sleepily roaming the landscape, had sighted a speck, one that moved. Like a black fly it traversed a bleached shoot of stones, three thousand feet under the terrace. A speck, or two specks? Running in for the glass he made sure. One speck, strictly speaking: one *mon-sieur* only; the other, simply a guide.

The waiter awoke the *bureau*; for there, too, invisible poppies were seeding. The faint buzz-uzz-uzz of the voice of the landlady, totting up columns of

frances in her bower, had thinned down to stillness; will failed her, the strong bee invaded by autumn, even to index the dying year's honey; she leant back, her eyes slowly filming; dozing, she mused on those other dozers, four of them, out on the terrace, her summer's lingering roses—the last, she half hoped, if the hope were not sin; were they gone, bees could sleep and not dream of missed provender. Roused by the waiter she mastered a sigh and heard him out benignly. Her equity valued his dutiful soul. At eight thousand feet any news is a thrill that should be in the gift of a landlady, no one less. He had done well; he had not, while she slept, usurped the prerogative. Issuing forth she imparted the glass to the terrace. “Pardon! A gentleman—mounting—now, at the end of the season. It is a resolute. He will be English.”

So Madame tactfully said; for our own was the speech that had drowsed, for some ten minutes past, on the lips of the four semi-recumbents whose four iron chairs, stilled for that space, now resumed their life's task of scrunching the neatly-raked miniature desert of round pebbles in which they stood. For the inn, though high, was not rude; had it been so, it would have been empty to-day; far from it, the legs of terrace chairs waded here in pebbles as round, loose and dry as any that crepitate under the planes of the first hotels of Lausanne. The resumptive sound of scrunching was loudest, as the recess had achieved deepest silence, under the person of Gabriel Newman, a pink and pleased man of about twenty-three, with thinning blond hair plastered tight, in the fashion, and damply gloving

the skull, and with scarcely more lines or puffs as yet on his forehead and cheeks than if he had lived well. What with the gentle bend of the chin, the softly aquiline nose, the smoothly-filled cheeks and the bulge of the eyes, and the curvilinear lines of the smile with which he always talked, his shaven face might strike you as just a little too rich a system of convexities, much as Michelangelo's luxuriant "Drunken Bacchus" might afflict a trainer. But any grazier would say that man or beast could not have looked more evenly fed. One thing this goodly frame wanted—a left leg; it used one of wood, or else the faithfulest image that Nature could carve, in her own flesh and bone, of that work of man. No one knew which, nor had Newman been known to admit, by so much as a wince or an oath—though he had the latter within easy call—that he walked with some pain on two sticks which were all but crutches, still less that he ever had to halt when minded to walk in the ways of his heart and in the sight of his eyes.

This sovereign spirit had drooped for some instants: a crossing shadow had chilled it. How unripe a knowledge, how stumbling a reason, how shallow a flow of conjecture did this Yankee paper from Paris, that now sprawled despised on his knees, address to the Autumn Handicaps, soon to stir England! Newman had mourned for his kind, that it should not do better. Then Nature, good to her infants, had filled him that bath of rose-tinted warmth from the west, and his eyes had closed to be soothed by it, some unspent virtue of luncheon assisting. Newman snored and care left

him. Guy Hathersage, basking more containedly beside him, lifted one eyelid, as sleeping cats do at a sound, and smiled to himself as the mouth of his friend fell a-gape and the newspaper slipped to the ground from his friend's slackening fingers. Simple system of organs, Gabriel!

Guy let fall the eyelid and mused on that system. To Guy it had charmless piquancy. Many things had, and most people. If nothing excited him, plenty of things made him slightly curious about them at first. An olive-skinned slip of a man, full of grace, a swayed osier to look at, Guy was bodily young for his twenty-two years. His pretty brown eyes had, when he talked, the quick, shy shift of a boy's when they will not be still lest you catch the wild soul in them. Guy's mind, however, was aged; friendlily, equably aged. Semi-amused almost always, hardly ever delighted, from people he looked for no thrill—only some neat, new patness of proof that no miracles come to vary the working, and ceasing to work, of the known springs and checks in a shopful of watches of many shapes—yet not so very many, and none novel, and most of them dusty.

Thirty yards off—the younger men had been smoking, and manners survived in the Hathersage family—Guy's sister sat by their father, a sixty-year man with a trim beard, not carved, but compendious by nature, and now hemmed with gray, and so perfectly brushed that you seemed to have seen no brushed beard before; a man so well bred that each feature showed like a sign in some new code specially made for the quick and safe

conveyance of fragile perceptions and courtesies; round, opened eyes like a wren's, bright in an instant with delicate ventures and fears; lips modeled as if to shape ironies gently or soften a tone in mercy to humble absurdity.

June, the girl of nineteen, had Guy's good looks, or more; but not, you would say, his tireless good-humor. At present she eyed with settled disfavor, through almost closed lids, some three of the ten noblest snow peaks in Europe. They stood up, beyond the now blackening trench of the valley below, paraded like Graces before this youthful she-Paris, and she found them wanting, like some other things in the past month of travel, her father's and hers. Venice and Paris, Florence and Fiesole, Rimini, Vallombrosa, Ancona, all were reviewed and rebuked. Paris was dust and white faces and leaves early dead, and dresses tried on—memory shuddered at thought of all that trying-on; and then all that time in the train; the waking in the sleeping-car to see an old Frenchwoman, risen at grisly dawn, remake her face of bluish white against the new day; and what a day!—of perpetual pattering rain, gazed upon numbly through streaming or misted panes during long, nauseous dining-car meals that paused much in their middles, but little between each one and the next. And, all the way south from Lugano, churches, galleries; galleries, churches, and always—she hated herself for remembering—the voice of her father, seemlily modulous, weaving its webs of picked, relevant comment between her and so many things which—she dimly suspected—had little to do with the

world he walked in, a world of culture fallen rather a-weary, half-understanding everything, placing everything, summoning up at the instance of every new thing, or thing newly seen, its appropriate mood of semi-emotion, as settled by balance of expert authority. Webs of blown rain between her and the St. Gotthard snows; webs of pertinent, passionless words between her and Bellini's tranced sense of the wonder of motherhood; curtains of ordered, raptureless reverence hung between her and that "Crucifixion" at Rome just when it seemed as if—one instant more and she might have held and made hers the strange, poignant delight of knowing, really knowing, as one knows one's headaches, what Christ had borne; everywhere wisps of one cobwebby lawn or another drawn between something in her that desired to put itself forth and attain completeness and something outside her that must, surely, answer to this, some new visibleness awaiting a quickened sight, like the many stars that must be shining only just out of reach of one's eyes. She came out of reverie frowning, to take Madame's offered field-glass without curiosity.

"Far down, mademoiselle. Now! Now!—they pass Bonaveau."

Two miles downhill a spot of black crossed swiftly the whitewashed wall of a tiny wayside chapel.

"There! There!" Madame fretted lest June miss the thrill. "Where the path runs out from under the pines."

"Yes, yes; one has eyes." And then June, with the glass at her eyes, bit her lip, vexed at her petulance.

Three days before she had prayed in that very chapel, a little dourly, that she might be better-tempered. Already the fleeting stain was off the white wall. "How they run!" she said to her father. How little she cared if they flew.

"Two Oreads?" murmured the elder. "'Swift as a horse up a steep hill.'" He had always at call some one else's apt word. When brought up against a new thing he would act like a yachtsman touching a pier, swinging out fenders wherever his paint might be scraped against some reality's rude balks of timber. Letters and art—to change the figure—this sensitive soul had learned to spread like a gelatine film over all its naked, soft surface, lest life, the neat strength of the acid, bite through and engrave. "Is it he that should come?" he asked June.

"Father Power? No. He comes to-morrow. Didn't I tell you the day?"

"Doubtless, my dear. You printed on dust—my poor memory."

June could almost have shrieked at that mild, lettered playfulness. Then, at a thought of her own, crossness collapsed in contrition. "Oh, father, it's I that forget. I was to have ordered his room, and I've not told Madame he is coming. Madame!"

"Mademoiselle?" The landlady listened. A friend of her guest's, a *curé* from Ireland—"Catholic, Madame, like you too, and us"—was going to Rome, a pilgrim; he would be passing by train to-morrow, down there in the valley, and wished to break the journey. Could Madame receive him?

“ But yes.” Madame’s gesture embraced in its scope the two walkers now breasting the steep, and this later clerical advent. “ It recommences, the season.”

June had handed the glass to her father, whose courtesy used it, not his desire. Two thousand eight hundred feet lower the sun, as Mr. Hathersage looked, caught the sweat on the guide’s dripping face and on a chest bared to get air. They shone ; they might have been vizor and breastplate in Paradise. “ Ah ! ” said the sensitive gentleman. Softly he shuffled across, to leave the glass with Newman, and went indoors to read Pascal in coolness.

CHAPTER II

“And deliver us from our daily bread.”

Mariana's Prayer.

IT was not in Newman to be surprised visibly. To animate narratives, later, he might say that this or that imbecility of a friend's had amazed him; but no one, he justly boasted, had ever seen him knocked all of a heap, like some poor lambs, by any impact of circumstance. So, when he had taken a long stare through the glass and, putting it down, said “Gorlummy!” it was as a virtuoso in popular speech that he said it, and not as one from whom the orison was really torn by the shock of an idea's entry on the spirit.

Guy breathed a lazy “Amen.”

“Know one Browne at Oxford?” asked Newman.

“Did yer? One Browne?”

“Of Auriol?”

“Yes. Year junior to me.”

“I don't know about ‘know.’ I've met him, perhaps.”

“You'll meet him again. He's that Derby winner that's belting uphill.”

Guy took the glass, without ardor, and looked. “The more shining face, or the less?”

“The unsweatiest. How's he to sweat, with the life he led? Now, do you know”—Newman gathered

impressiveness—"that man would come into Pole's rooms at Auriol dead sober—you see, you were always supposed to be blind in Pole's rooms—and there he'd be, making a fool of himself, sitting up in a chair, among all of us."

"Preaching?"

"No. Just looking on. No, he isn't a pi man, exactly. I do say that for him. A pi man I knew took him on—about his soul, that sort of lay; found he didn't believe a Jack thing. And yet, do you know"—again Newman's manner grew graver—"I've seen that man reading away at the Bible as if it were some other book—as if he *liked* it."

"Ah?" Guy encouraged the vein. It was sport to see Newman, in sketching this newcomer, sketch himself too.

"Caught him at it in bed," pursued Newman, "one night I got lost. I was crossing the quad, time of night when a path gets as broad as it's long. I fell into his rooms and there he was, at it. I thought he must be ill or something. 'What's wrong?' I said. 'Going to be hanged in the morning?' I said, just to cheer him. He let a yell. 'Wrong! I should think not! The man who wrote "Job" was all right. Listen, about all these beasts!' And off he went, spouting whole chunks. It might have been the evening paper."

"I give you the thanks of the Press."

"Press? What? Oh, I forgot that you own a rag now."

"Three-sixteenths only—the merest shred of a—

must we say?—rag. So far has the will of a great-aunt involved me. Don't stop. What did you say when Browne—"

"Say? I bolted for my stable. Didn't seem right, somehow, having a good time like that with the Bible. Very next night I met Chadd—it was under Blunt's table, I think; anyhow, things had run a bit clear in my head and I told him. It troubled Chadd fearfully. 'Why, for a skeptic to do it,' said Chadd, 'it's like drawing a check on a bank you've no money at.' Chadd cried to think of it. You see, although he could take his drink like other people, Chadd was a serious man, really—plowed in divinity, that sort of thing, and a curate by now. 'Think of the sinfulness'—that's what he said—'sheer false pretenses, like saying "Gorblimey!" although you're an infidel.' Well, there's a good lot in that. Whajja think?"

"I was thinking," Guy said, with an air of innocent dreaminess, "that I remembered Browne well. He used to speak sweetly of you."

"Eh? What?" Newman pricked up disquieted ears.

"He said, 'I just like the very notion of Newman'—Browne was staring across through the smoke at you; 'I like that honest hatred he has of learning and poverty. He's such a spess!' Browne doated upon you, like a collector. He told me a charming story; he'd brought to your rooms some pundit who'd won half the 'Varsity prizes, and you had said afterwards, 'One or two blighters like that were enough to ruin a whole college.'"

"Well, what would you say, with that sort of owl coming flapping round, when you had some hopes of the freshers?"

"I should bleed for you. Browne, no doubt, did; or—" Guy dangled the unuttered words like a cast of dry flies.

"Well?" Newman rose to them.

"You know his trade?"

"Lord, no!"

"Proud man! I do. I'm half in it."

"Mean he's a blooming reporter?"

"Novelist, journalist, dramatist—all the same thing, you know; workers in fiction. You've read his novel?"

"Not heard of it."

"Yet the world does—and of a play that's just coming. And now do you guess?"

"Eh?"

"That at Pole's you were—possibly—*sitting*?"

"D'you mean he'd have the wickedness to—?"

"These artists do use the model, you know."

Like a child, that without wilful cruelty tickles a worm with a leaf, Guy fretted his friend. Newman was only a book, the one nearest to hand, the library's latest futility, sent to amuse if it could. Guy gave it its chance, hoping little; he languidly turned the pages; he opened the stout, vulgar soul at new chapters, its boasts and pluck and lusts and tremors. Any paper-knife served; Browne, this orient author, as well as another. Guy really remembered Browne now—their few meetings at Oxford, and then a slight gap while

Browne was obscure, and then how Guy had thought they really must have Browne to dinner; they always had rising authors to dinner, on the off-chance that they might be amusing. Blabbing to Newman what Browne had said of him might not have been very nice, now that Guy came to think of it. Still, if it made any trouble, he would not have meant the trouble; indeed, he would wish quite sincerely that harm had not come, and would stand off a little and eye himself with mild wonder and ask, without harshness, what could have made him do it.

All the harshness the family had of that kind was lodged in his sister, a true hanging judge of herself when the mood was on her. Vexed that she had forgotten that room—she who had specially asked Father Power to come—she was going assize at this moment, hounding to judgment each poor little lapse from grace, or from graciousness, during their month's stern chase of civilized pleasure. How she had murmured! "Oh, I *am* vexed!" "I've been so disappointed!" "I've had such a horrible time!"—one of these forms or another seemed to have opened all her talks with her father. "You feel relief now that it's fresher?" the poor man had timidly asked, one moon-lit night, at the end of a querulous day in the sunshine near Venice, when ripples of water and ripples of music, indistinguishable in their rhythmic coolness, were lapping under their gondola. June's answering snap—"I might, if this frock didn't hurt me so under the arms"—came back now to plague its inventor. Then that day of shame at Perugia! Seeing her gaze from the hill,

out over blue Umbria, he had asked friendlily, nervously, what she was thinking, and she had brutally dashed his hopes of fit local emotions with "I was just wondering when my head means to stop aching." And oh, the first morning at Florence!—the start to walk down from Fiesole, where they had stayed; how, as they set out, his mind was happily fingering Dante and Pater and Ruskin and Browning, and all the kind interveners between its soft tissues and stark Middle Ages or unbated Tuscany, until, scarcely over the threshold, June had banished content with the desperate saying: "I promise myself no pleasure at all from this walk, the wind blows my hat so." That day was the nadir. On entering the windless Uffizi her father had ventured tremblingly, "Now I hope you'll feel better," and she had snarled, "Yes, so do I, I am sure"; and at dinner had said, as she viciously shook her napkin out, "This evening meal is one of the worst plagues of the day"—a devil's grace. Grace after meat too: her father had offered to read Michelangelo's sonnets, out on the Fiesole terrace, the Val d'Arno spread out below them in deepening purple and crimson, and she had said darkly: "It *might* help to make us to forget what we've eaten." The thought of each slip into some base sourness, and of his uncontrollable wince, or taxed courtesy, pierced her with rusty skewers. And yet, was she wrong? Wrong to wound him, of course; why should he bear the sins of the world? But to find Europe dusty, dust underfoot and a dust-filled air?—what else was it? Paris was dust and white faces and—so the old wheels of bafflement,

rage, self-pity, self-censure, each turning the next with its cogs, ground oillessly round in her mind.

Guy roused her. "I bring you a marvel," he said, but his tone said that marvels were all an old fable. The man coming up, he told her, was an acquaintance.

She looked up, incurious. "The marvel would be if he weren't. Wasn't the man we ran down on Lugano—the swimmer—your first fag at Harrow? Or was that the godson of some one papa knew in Parliament? Why, the beggar we found at Torcello had cleaned boots at Rome, at the Embassy, when Uncle Conrad was there."

"My poor sister, you touch on a fatal truth. One friendly soul like papa can run through a whole family's fortune of newness in people it meets. Papa leaves us no lands undiscovered. We run our frail shallops ashore, you and I, on some stranger—we hope so, at least; we leap from the bows; all ardent, we run up appropriate flags; tiptoe, we peer through the jungle. And lo! in the first clearing, embers! Remains of a bamboo erection, signs of a garden, of civilization. Despair!—it is one of papa's disused residencies! Yet let me be just. It is not papa, it is Newman, nay, it is I, who have met yonder climber."

"Climber?" Climber or walker, little she cared.

She was girding within at Guy's irony. Why should it play round their father's dear head? But had not her own murmur started it? So the old wheels of complaint and compunction jarred on while Guy spoke.

"So reason tells me. Thus: he that comes has a guide. But no one takes guides to come here and no

further. What follows? They climb in the morning one of these evil eminences?"

He drew her eyes round to the snows of three tall peaks to the south-east, behind and above the inn, and now flushing to warmth in the first red of sunset. Up there, for an eye that had its health, all was dressed in illusion, to wear for an hour at most; frost would then model dead whiteness in iron where now the high snowfields were soft laps edged with pink, restful to lie in, it seemed; sunny ledges and terraces, hoisted and tilted for basking upon; and all like some place happily dreamt of, aglow with a visionary glamour; made, too, like things in good dreams, without hardness of structure; fold yielded to fold, stair swelled convex or wave-like to pass into stair; only, at the southernmost peak's north-eastern corner—the Dent Rouge Guy told her the peak was—there ran up a steep sky-line, a framing ridge with its dark rocks half bare, a slanting line of black dots like a route pricked out on a map, with the fields of rose-tinted snow below it, and fields of sun-searched blue air above. It looked as if it must lead to some world's wonder. So, at least, June dimly felt, not having the single eye's vision, and yet having a blurred sense that it could be had, did one know whither to strive.

Guy prattled on about Browne—"one of those dragons of energy, enemies to peace"—how he would drag three reluctants from bed on a midsummer Sunday at hours unthought of, mythical, before Oxford's earliest bell, to scull and tow upstream right through the sun's working day, unwinding strange coils of the

Isis among distant meads. "He says 'Come' and one cometh. I went myself once, I with my large use for sleep, to maintain my amenity. How the man divagates!" Guy was looking down through the glass. The two moving spots on the side of the mountain, still a long mile from the inn, would part for a while and rejoin; the track of the one drew with a plodding pencil the easiest upward route; the other drew loops on each side of that line; it would turn aside, visit boulders and gullies, or loiter at white broken water, and then, coming back straight and fast, move again for a while, by the side of the slow, even goer. "Convince yourself"—Guy gave his sister the glass—"that it is not a lady exercising a dog."

"Is there a wind," she asked, looking, "down there? Here the air's fainting."

Guy looked. From the excursive figure's left hand, hanging close to its side, a handkerchief, held by one corner, streamed out horizontal behind him, like a blown pennon. Guy took other evidence. "Not a pine stirring. The breeze is his make. The wind of his haste."

"Winds are to the tempestuous," their father said softly, remelting into their company. Sunset was come, and sunsets had their dues; their place in Turner was safe; they were in poetry's peerage; like saints they were calendared; no rude, startled act of adoration was meet, but a liturgy, something apt from sensibility's rubric, a collect fitted to hour and place, the right choice among art's canonical forms of vespers. "And now the sun had stretched out all the hills"—

he crooned it over twice, watching the black spike of shade thrown down on the snow by each western peak; swiftly each shadow lengthened, its tip marching down the far side of the valley, then lost for a time in the valley's black bottom, then sighted again, rushing up the slope on this side, past where they stood, to the west-facing snows overhead. Higher and higher up the rosy radiance was driven before these invaders; its rosiness seemed to be penned in and deepened as space for it failed, as if the same portion of dye were suffusing a lessening ground.

"And over piney tracts of Vaud
The rose of eve steals up the snow,"

the man of culture was murmuring, half-absently fingering the words, like beads on a rosary.

Night involved the two travelers below. Far down the mountain a spark struck itself, as it seemed, struggled and blinked for a moment, then steadied itself and burned on, a pin-prick of light in the wide pit of blackness. They watched from the terrace for two or three minutes, silent, till Guy's eye met June's. Each saw that the other was waiting—Guy lazily tickled and June in torment—until there should come from their father the lines about lated travelers hasting—what was it?—to gain timely inns.

"It's chilly. Do let us go in," she burst out, with a shiver that was of the mind mainly. Her father returned to Pascal with a lingering, discomforting sense of dues not exhaustively paid. Guy agreed, without hope of joy, to learn euchre from Newman.

June went to her room to write letters; doing that, she could sometimes attain plumbless depths of absorption. She wrote by her window; she wondered at first what it meant, and how long she had sat, when she saw shafts of lantern-light dashed this way and that on the gravel outside and heard casual words in a voice that seemed fresh as the plash of a laugh in the dark from a boat coming home.

CHAPTER III

“Murmur of living,
Stir of existence,
Soul of the world!”

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

“WE had all been fairly original works of creation,” Guy wrote to a friend late that evening, “all during the soup and up to halfway through the fish (conceive it! They hoist fish up hither: *despiciunt montem pisces*—guess how my father abounded!), and then the man Browne came in, and lo! we were faded old replicas, prints from the third state, and not good impressions at that, for here was the real proof etching, all edge and luster, shaming us. He goes about, liking things insanely; pitches himself like an infant at what amuses him. I can see him yelling ‘Bags I!’ and annexing the Forum or pouching the Vatican. Yet is he modest; he bounds not. June and my father, poor Newman and I, all sat and blinked while he spilt out, as well as shyness would let him, his cornucopious gains of travel—a prize-fight, some new and more earth-shaking Rodin at Paris, the way they act Ibsen at Munich, the way they make cider near Caen—he gets drunk on the difference between it and how they make cider in Devonshire. Quite a sound type, you know, only a little cyclonic for us quiet people. To-morrow, at earliest cock-crow, or sooner,

he whirls me up some sky-impaling mountain behind the premises. In very truth, sir, I had as lief be hanged, sir, as go, but June has an impulse to rush out and do something violent; also, the deuce knows why, one feels that one would be out of the proper main stream if one stayed—the same notion, no doubt, that makes the dust follow motors. I had it, that Sunday he tore you and me from our beds, our altars, our simple, devout student life, to toil up the river all day.”

That day on the Oxford river had come up at dinner—an obvious topic for people with few common memories. Guy had begun it. Did Browne still seduce the devout—“‘little ones which believe,’ like me”—from prayers on Sundays? Or had he learnt better? Had he ordered his millstone?

June shivered. Guy's jets of chaff could not hurt those they were aimed at; his spirit had no drop of vitriol in its aspersions; but why not take care what he splashed by the way? In churches in Italy June had not cared to see children gambol with dogs on the steps of altars. It was uncivil.

Browne's eye caught her overstrained frown at the venial ribaldry. He was surprised, and in that surprise came the first clear impression he had of her, body and mind—a Flora sitting in judgment, Hebe turned Grand Inquisitor, a Rhadamanthine rose.

“The sin would have been not to go,” Browne replied, and unintendingly made Mr. Hathersage easy; it gave him a cue; he could turn from Browne's and Guy's to another going-a-Maying, more classic:

“ ‘Nay! not so much as out of bed?
When all the birds have matins said,
And sung their thankful prayers: 'Tis sin,
Nay, profanation to keep in.’ ”

He hummed the words lingeringly; so a bee hums and hovers before folding wings on the one flower that she was looking for.

Browne sucked in the sound of the lines; they were new to him. “That was just it, sir,” he said. The lines seemed to work on him; he set off eagerly, bunglingly, trying to tell how he had waked that day early, to streets shining and silent, the first shadows reaching to all lengths about them, in unfamiliar directions. His talk had no gloss or run, like a Hather-sage’s; more like the babbling of some one still in a marvel’s presence, interjecting broken surprise and delight.

It was crude; it was like some undressing begun in public; it might go to all lengths. June felt her face tingle with shame, as one does, in one’s safety, for some rash taker of foolish odds. Oh, to have this man away and to make Guy tell her it all. For Guy had been there; how Guy must have kindled! Guy had felt that auroral freshness and wonder; only some overflow from secret raptures of Guy’s could have animated this alien.

Guy, seeing some one begin to abound in a vein, drew him on. They strung reminiscences—Godstow at eight in the morning, mists on the move, the meadows still littered with diamonds; and breakfast there, on pink trout, by the door of the inn.

"We as pink as the trout," put in Guy, "from that swim at the weir. My teeth chatter to think of it."

June looked at Guy still; she was glad of his lithe-ness and full eyes, their mild brown enisled in clear bluish white; no teeth were so white as his, either; she saw his lips set for the dive, and how they would rise laughing after it, out of the lasher's race. And Guy could dissemble that ecstasy! "Then, above Godstow?" she asked. "Do go on," she added impatiently.

"Oh, you tow miles and miles," Browne went on, "with your head among the larks and your naked toes feeling cowslips." He fumbled for some word, then stumbled along. "The grass is in varnish—you know the look? Deep grass—the trees wade in it deeper each Sunday."

Many bathes, jocund meals, pipes in Elysium—the girl grew aware of them, found them all good, of a goodness not physical only, but poignant with some fleeting and flower-like grace of young delight. Lamely Browne told the day out—how the evening was happy years long; "the sun found the right place in the sky, and stayed there"; then home in the warm dark, at rest on the rhythm of the oars. June held her breath, fearing for Guy, lest some stupid man in the boat—this Mr. Browne, perhaps—should speak and drown the note of one drip from a blade on the feather; each note fell round and cool and lay whole like a pearl on the cushion of silent night.

The talk, when June took it in next, was of pictures—or books, was it?—talk, on her father's and

brother's side, modern, equipped, lightly glancing; only, not eager. They mooned in the van of all the arts, rode at will with the head of each column and pitied its hopes and were kind to its middlingness; nothing was left remarkable under their visiting eyes; and yet they kept on, they marched over the waste, urged by some habit of well-bred forbearance blent with some unspent instinct of caste captaincy. And they had solaces, privacies, tiny reserves of less deep disappointment with somebody's work, here and there, that had not been snirched with a fame too vulgar; failing others, you had Leopardi to read; Shakespeare, although he wrote much else, had written the better of the Sonnets; and there were the pictures of Maris, "the Maris that counts," the right one of the three.

Browne had waved an audacious flag and was now looking shamefaced, as youth does when wisdom receives its flags and clarion blasts with bland lassitude. June, with a twinge of compassion for culture so half-baked, had heard him throw out the raw notion that now was the time to be living in: painting, sculpture, the novel, the play—in every garden the roses, the perfected roses, the pick, were, perhaps, only just bursting; the day of days might be at hand and we, the lucky men in the lottery, lucky beyond Pericleans, Augustans, Elizabethans, we might have drawn the great hour of all—high noon, high tide, high midsummer. He tumbled it out like that, garishly. So there followed a pause soft and deep, a bed of feathers and sand held out for the arrow, so witlessly loosed, to sink into harmlessly.

June felt with her kindred; but also she now saw their mood as if from without. It was like a dispirited god's, sad-eyed and clement, bearing with mankind after a Fall; the world was like some storied place whose story was forfeited; it was to them a Stratford that Shakespeare had never been near; a Westminster Abbey detected as modern and, if you looked into it, smart in design, nothing more. Essentiality was gone. The trees had no hamadryads, poor things.

In mercy to Browne's raw gawkishness Guy led the way round to themes that might—it was to be hoped—let a mountaineer shine, if to shine were in him. Mr. Hathersage helped; he cited distinguished eulogists of the open air, the life in the sun, of “enduring hardness,” a fashion raging just then among imitant minds. Had Browne read Nature's last confidant? Some one was named who had railed or pouted readably at roofs and the tablecloth. Browne seemed to be at a loss.

“The man with a style,” Guy explained, “and a cough, who was out two whole nights—you remember? He drove his pyjamas, piled on an ass, from a sleeping-place under a bank of wild roses to one to leeward of a clump of honeysuckles. You smile? You alarm me. Is it *not* all moral beauty, as well as dog-roses?”

Browne laughed. “When I was a boy, and slept out, up the river, it used to be shirking one's tooth-brush.”

“‘Now I know,’” Mr. Hathersage crooned, having found what he sought, “‘the secret of the making of the best people. It is to live in the open air and to eat

and sleep with the earth.' ” He fancied he thought so, but few men would more surely and swiftly come in when it rained.

Browne launched off again, with his usual effort at starting. “ It’s very nice of the bards and sages, sir; only mayn’t they change hares next moment and go whooping off on some other line—perhaps saying, this time, that the true virile game is to stand up to soot and germs in East Ends and Black Countries and—? Why—” Not alone that which goeth into the mouth intoxicateth a man. Browne looked round the table exaltedly, caught at the first eye that he lit on, which chanced to be Newman’s, and rushed ahead: “ Why, Newman, haven’t there been in our time three immense revolutions in collars, and—? ”

He meant no harm. For all that he noticed, Newman might have been wearing no collar at all. But he was. And in these matters of fashion Newman not only followed the chase, but would sometimes ride over the hounds; even now he was wearing a collar that might in three months be a stroke of conformity more consummately timed than to-day. So his heart told him; and, having insolences of his own to let off on occasion, he thought he spied one in this unwitting blunderer.

Mr. Hathersage saw how the coltish ears had flicked back; he hurried to make a diversion with more bookish stuff about life far from books. Why not “ go back to Nature ”?—that was the gist of it.

Browne, flushed and with eyes alight, caught the thrown ball. “ Back, sir? How far, though? To

tents and no meat from the butcher? Why stop at that? Why not beech-mast and acorns?"

"Go the whole hog, as they say?" Mr. Hathersage purred.

"Oh, doesn't our elderly friend, or aunt, Common Sense—?" Guy murmured, to lubricate speech in Browne.

Browne turned to Guy, joyously free; one could not quite rally the graybeard. "Common Sense comes me cranking in?—yes. And then we bolt back to our dear old complexities? Last month a little book came out; I got it; a kind of tramp's manual; amateur tramp, of course, with a check-book about him, done up in oiled silk. All chapter one was a lyric—joy of living; over-safety of this effete age; out upon offices, dining out, Consols, fixed hours, libraries?—so on, *ad lib*, till page forty. From there to the end it was all how to rig up some wonderful tent, and to steam fish and brew a quite ineffable punch, and buy the most magical frying-pans, sleeping-bags, spirit-stoves—as if poor, passionate man, when he'd once got a spirit-stove, ever could stop on this side of a big, shiny kitchen-range, tying his soul to the earth. Oh, I beg pardon—" He turned with a start to the lady. He thought she had made a sound.

She only said, "Please go on." But he was gravely, aghast; he had let himself go, in the first words that came—stupid ones, doubtless. Besides, on what toes might he not have come down!

June did not like him; he was unrestful to do with; he trumpeted; he was incalculable, though naïf; to

have him about was like taking a walk in the park with some one who might at any time leap upon one of the green chairs and preach, at the top of a childlike voice, some outlandish doctrine, and make your face hot for him. Nor had he a physical right to be like that in mind. He was not built for a crank. In body and face he was mere standard youth, with that clean blueness of eye and whiteness of tooth and puissancy of neck and wrist, ripe brown with stored sunshine. He ought to be merely commonplace-minded, like other young British Apollos, running fountains of stock banalities, desolators of garden-parties in Surrey; then she could condemn him at ease. As it was, he was an irritant. But she had breeding and a quick mercy for the abashed. She would set on his feet the floored dancer of galliards. "Why rough it at all, then?" she asked, encouraging.

Browne looked round the table for help. Would no one explain? They must all know how, better than he. No one spoke. He had the lead and must keep it, and fluency, like a summer-dried fountain, had failed when the need was sorest. "Do you think," he said limply, "one does it to get at the feel of—well, of *not* roughing it?"

"By contrast?" June's questioning look offered help.

"Well, by coming at it from behind, as it were—from the time before comfort was yet thought of. I found out one night"—the spasmodic flow quickened a little—"the rare good invention a pillow is. We'd been caught on the Weissborn, Louis—my guide

here—and I. The first half of the night I lay flat on a rock. Then I had a great notion and rested my head on a rucksack with bottles, a loaf and a great pair of boots in it. It was divine!”

“Voluptuary!” Guy breathed.

“Yes,” said Browne, eagerly; “simply.”

“And I had thought you Antæus,” Guy softly chid, “coming to your mother for a kiss!”

“Kiss? Dear old tigress! The sport is to feel your head’s outside her mouth; and you can’t if you won’t pop it in, just an inch or so. Try. Come up the Dent Rouge to-morrow with Louis and me.”

“Eh—?” Guy ruefully scanned the proffered adventure. June fixed amazed eyes on him. Could he decline it? No, he could not; but a debility in him, not a fervor, accepted. See a pith ball feebly dance at the call of a piece of electrified glass—Guy was like that, half animated by any impulse that fired those who were nearest him. Gales that blew in their spirits would set faint draughts stirring in his, light airs with just enough motion to keep the miniature sails of his will perceptibly flapping until he drifted rather than steered across some new starting-line, not of his own choosing. And meanwhile the idle and curious eye of his mind was full of cool light; with amusement it watched what he did, just as it took in traits in others, virtues or failings, not wishing them anything else; were they not parts of the scenery? “I am the clay,” he said suavely to Browne, “thou art the potter.”

June had longed for his voice to come soon and be

ardent. When it came, lifelessly bland, she felt she had to give up a hope and lose a memory. This, then, was how Guy had gone up that magical and sacred river, a pressed man suffering Eden; his banter was not a mere veil; it was all of him. Dinner was over; she rose bewildered with that effacement of an imagined brother. Yet all was not loss; she, if not he, had just lived with a will that old day of his, a day unlike any that came now; it shone with a glamorous goodness of light, like some lustrous single days remembered since childhood or seen in stories told her of Ireland by her own Irish mother, three years dead.

At a door leading straight to the terrace they passed from the dining-room's heat into a night fresh as a bath; in it their voices splashed coolly. No wind blew, but June felt the air all astir as a brimming river is, at high tide, when it does not flow nor ebb, and yet moves, fingering its banks and arranging its waters: space was a vessel filled; it held something that groped and strove to be felt; and some sense in June strained to take up the challenge; it craned, it shook itself out, a floating film of absorbency, on the charged air. Almost—it seemed—overhead, that north-east ridge of the Dent Rouge, the one by which Guy was to go, sped up through the snows to the region where stars in the high frost winked and flashed; they seemed to have life and intention, such pulse had their fierce sparks, and now and then one would dart to earth slantwise, or fall headlong as Lucifer from the dome's roof. Behind the inn a wood fire was burning; sparks flying up from it met those others and crossed them.

“ ‘Angels of God, ascending and descending.’ ” Browne’s voice, not far from her, made a note of their look, for himself, but what he said fitted her feeling, and carried it on, a feeling as if in this heaving darkness some world-transforming whisper were stealing close up to the line across which new sounds slip into hearing. How not to miss it? What if the chance should go by, like a passing ship’s rope accidentally trailed, brushing the face of one drowning unnoticed? Panic beset her; she saw the ridge spring like a new Jacob’s ladder into a sky strangely opened.

“Guy”—she spoke low, drawing close to her brother—“let me come.”

“To-morrow? Up that unspeakable gradient?”

“Let me come with you,” she said entreatingly.

“With me? Say instead of me. June, my poor lamb, could you take Isaac’s place on the altar?”

She stamped to hear his voice rippling along, trifling. “You know I can’t go with these strange men, alone. And I *must* go.”

Guy’s shrug came out well in the starlight, as main architectural outlines do.

“ ‘Some hae meat and winna eat,
And some hae nane, that want it.’ ”

He sighed the words mildly and then spoke of many things needed by climbers which she had not got—an ice-ax, snow-spectacles, great nails, so on.

She countered each point quickly. Axes?—a sheaf of them stood for sale in the hall; blue spectacles too;

in the open wood-shed, at that very moment, the porter was banging new nails by candle-light into a boot.

But the one guide, Guy feared, would not do for the three of them. That checked her, an instant, but "You must consult Mr. Browne," she doggedly said, not yet yielding.

Joy! Mr. Browne pooli-pooled the objection. Why, *he* was—well, no, not a guide, but quite a porter; he had the experience, though not the diploma. Besides, the banger of nails in the wood-shed had both; they would take him; Madame could well spare him, now.

"Oh, thank you!" June cried in a tone too elate—so it sounded to her: it gave her a twinge of shamed pride; why bare even the least space of her soul's surface to any stranger?

"What hour to start?" Guy asked Browne resignedly.

"No hurry. Threë'll do. We can't very well climb the ridge itself before daylight, and that's not till five, and it's only two hours' walk to the foot. If they'll call us at two—"

Guy went to give orders. Browne and June were alone. "How safe one's face feels in the dark!" he said, quite simply, after a moment. The words seemed to fall on that bare place in her and cover it, as the naked are clothed in the innocence of others. He, too, she was somehow aware, had winced, perhaps flushed, with a sense of the twinge that had crossed her, and then had been glad that no one could see him

wince, and now let it out unwittingly, like a child for whom, in some abashed moment, to go into the dark is to go into ease, and avow it. June wondered. Except in a child she had never seen the penetrative kind of simplicity.

CHAPTER IV

“Nur wo du bist sei alles, immer kindlich,
So bist du alles, bist unüberwindlich.”

GOETHE.

ROUGH ENGLISH TRANSLATION

“Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

AT five the guide halted to blow out the lantern; dawn was an hour off yet, but the sky had turned violet, blenching down eastwards into a thin and cold blue, astringently sharp like the blue of skimmed milk. Due east the longish crest of Mont Bouquetin, seen across a wide glacier, bit its black edge into this paleness.

Above the five climbers' heads there rose the ridge of their hopes; first a snow slope, steep and a little concave; its profile rushed up in one soar, like the line of light swept by a rocket; above it the ridge seemed to be of dark rock, its shape indistinct; yet higher, and also lighter in color and so lifting spectrally out of the twilight, the ridge rose as a twisted stake fence of wild pinnacles; one or two failing stars blinked feebly among them, yet still the ridge soared on and lost itself up there. It looked endless to June, it felt endless to Guy, as the five, roped in file, kicked steps for themselves up the rustling snow slope for an hour, and then scrambled on up the tumbled dark rocks

above, Guy at times on all fours and asking himself, without indignation, why he was there.

They found a good flat place and breakfasted. While they ate dawn came, dewless and birdless, with no pretty ways; a last star went out and then an undazzling orb, its rim studded with short darts of light, drew clear of the earth with even, purposeful speed. Guy eyed it. "A somewhat bald pageant," he said in a measured tone, like one eschewing severity.

Browne chuckled. "The classical style, I suppose."

"No, no. The romantic," June cried, and then stopped, clutched by self-criticism. Rubbish! What rubbish! Stock raptures of female effusiveness. Then, as suddenly, came an impulse of salvage, to try to lift into truth the word let fall by rote. "Isn't 'romantic' what's splendid and strange? And just listen."

Far down, in the glacier that curved round the foot of their ridge, the straining ice creaked; then it resettled. They heard it out, silently. Stillness refroze itself round them; all the air seemed a palace of stillness, with only infinitesimal winds stealing about its vacuous chambers. June heard, in her resting body, some pulse or breath that the climb had fluttered; it rustled—a sound like crushed feathers; it seemed as if the others must hear, but they heard their own.

Browne looked at her friendlily, curiously. "I meant the sun," he explained—"the big, bare way that he has with him—'not trick't or flounc'd,' you know, like—"

"Like our poor Surrey daybreaks?"

"Ones that are all wet eyelash and twittering lawn? No. Surrey hasn't the trick."

"Trick?" she asked, rather august, as she always grew when she felt at a loss.

He was confounded. "Her own trick—oh, yes. I only meant—not the classical one."

"What's that?" she asked, more clemently.

Still, a prostrating demand. "The classical dodge?" He got the question confirmed, to gain time.

"Yes." She was waiting.

He had to plunge. "Isn't it—well, is it this—for the sun, or the earth, or whatever it is, to be just its bare self and yet take your breath away—like the old boys who could say in their poems that somebody died, or cried, and lo! it's tragic?"

He inwardly groaned at himself; was that all he could say, out of all that he meant? But in this air, at this hour, ideas could pass and repass; it was a conductor. Besides—though he could not know this—his voice had self-attesting tones, in a word here and there, of a zestful veracity, turns and returns of the hound, nose to ground, caring about the scent only. June thought. So the sun, the mere sun, was all that to some people. And, strangely, a breath of that gusto invaded her, some stir of the troubled delight of sense put forth on things primal and vast, like the beginning of worlds.

She came out of reverie shivering. Time to go on: that was clear. And now, without slighting the

recreations of others, Guy made it known that his mind was enriched with this sport to the height of its needs, and that "brother body" craved ease. At eve, dewy eve, he would freely accept any impressions the others might bring back of the summit. June looked piteous at this, and he made haste to add that, of course, he would go down alone; the rest must go on. When June's eyes signaled a refusal of this composition Guy's brightened with silent, confidential laughter at *bourgeois* prudishness, escorts, chaperons; they were *vieux jeu*, his looks said; they were not for the clean of to-day. That moved her, and then he said the slighter things that could be said; unless she went on he would go on and perish and leave his bones whitening, the ridge being no place for their transport. So it was settled, except that the porter must go back with Guy; the glacier below was not for lone walkers.

While Louis repacked broken victuals, Browne and June silently watched the two others diminishing down the snow ridge. June turned at a sound; it was Louis, pawing the ground, athirst for the enemy.

The guide advanced, first on the rope, the girl second. That rope can do wonders; currents of gay comradeship spark along it; sulks and reserves it conducts harmlessly into the earth. Browne nodded towards Louis as June was starting, her ten yards behind him. "He'll sing in a moment," Browne whispered, smiling.

She too was merry, at ease, a surprise to herself. "The band plays the corps into action? Dear

Louis!" The three might have climbed together for weeks, they were such friends. And, surely enough, the lyric impulse was soon uncontainable.

"Montagnes d'Evolène,
Vous êtes mes amours;
Cabanes fortunées
Où j'ai reçu le jour,"

Louis trolled till breath failed. It did soon. For the ridge changed. So far it had been a fair causeway, narrow enough but, from left edge to right, pretty level, a gangway-plank running up steep but true. Now it was taking a list to the left; the gangway's left edge had somehow dipped down; to go on they would first have to crawl up the slant to the higher right edge of the plank, so to speak, and then work up that as they might.

Louis diffused himself over the slabby slant, gurgling with joy like a fish-fed cat, made nondescript movements, and in a few seconds sat puffing and crowing astride of the sharp upper edge. June followed. Arrived, she looked over the edge. It had no other side to be seen; the crest that she clung upon beetled out over a void, like an eave; all was cut away under it. Holding on with one hand and her knees, June searched about, scraped a stone out of a cleft and dropped it over. It fell clear through air for two hundred feet, then struck a wall of hard snow and spun along down it, making a faint, distant hiss.

"Good— isn't it?" Browne, who had scrambled up after her, panted out, breathless with haste and rap-

ture. The gaze of both followed the stone where it still spun or slid or leapt on, now out of hearing, two thousand good feet down the wall, until at the top of its speed it was fielded extinguishingly by a waiting crevasse, a shark's slit of a mouth with soft lips of snow curved over parted ice teeth. At each hazard of its descent Browne had made tiny noises unconsciously, little grunts of happy absorption, holdings of breath as the stone neared a rock or a hole, releases of breath when it cleared them, almost a sigh when the run ended. June heard these sounds while watching the stone; or rather—absurd, but it seemed so—hearing them *was* watching the stone more absorbedly than she had known that she could watch anything.

Attention relaxed, they looked up and she saw in his face a glee new to her; yet she knew it; she felt it rise in her too—the glee of a safety no longer unfelt or tasteless, like safety down there in the valley; now it was made salt to the sense; it was prized because worked for; it glowed, a triumph for all the taut muscles; it stood in relief, cut out on a beautiful background of risk; it was saved from being a matter of course, taken for granted. She felt her world widening again; there were some, then, to whom such joys were not fortuitous flashes; they knew where to come for them. What might one not know?—how to use them, perhaps, as avenues up to yet other heights of strange delight that no one had told her of.

“It is best,” Louis said, with Greek moderation, “not to slip here.”

Overhead the ridge was a file of shattered towers; it mounted wavering; now four or five of these towers, one after another, would shoot straight up at the sky; then some blast from the south would seem to have caught a whole troop of them—all their tips swayed to the north; like a row of blown flames they bent out over space; and then the blown look would pass and a fifty-foot splinter of straight stone would shoot up again. The party had been working into the north while the sun had rounded towards south; now they were in their mountain's own shadow, but far above them the staggering column of stone stakes emerged into sunlight; the topmost turrets had rest and basked pensively. June looked at these. "How they muse!" she said aloud, though to herself.

"Yes." Browne for a moment considered her. No, it was not gush; she saw things, this girl; in a town she would know how high towers dream in hazes of luminous dust, over unrestful streets. He considered her.

Round or else over each of those sentinel spires the climbers must go. Soon Louis was scaling the first; from twenty feet up an obelisk, thirty feet high, his boot nails gleamed over the heads of the others. His toes ground off the rock a small hail of granules of crushed ice that pattered on hats below and bit the warm flesh at a sleeve. Soon it was June's turn. How easy it was—just to let fall away, like a cloak from the body, an incapacity put on—when could it have been that she put it on? It was no part of her. Merely to live with a will in the reach of an arm up to

grasp a stone knob overhead, holding her breath, with a child's gleeful cunning, to keep her chest close to the rock while she did it. That was all.

From the top she watched Browne coming up. He moved with bold care; each hold that he used was tested with rigor, but, once tried, was utterly trusted, and grasp passed into grasp to make one continuous, sinuous, act of adhesion, the whole body working together in movements that sent rippling folds down the back of his coat as the ordered power ran wave-like along the muscles below.

From the obelisk's tip they dropped a few feet, on its upper side, to a thin edge of snow that led to the base of the pinnacle next on the ridge, some forty feet on. Each side of this edge was a thousand-foot ice-chute, and south winds had modeled the snow, as it fell on the ridge, so that the edge had a jutting cornice; it curled over northward so that the pointed shaft of an ax, driven straight down at the place that looked at first fittest to walk on, made a clean hole that showed daylight below and the cold bluish shine of the ice-chute, three hundred feet under.

"A porter's job, Louis," said Browne, and, changing places, addressed himself to the traverse, hacking the fair and false cornice away with his ax as he went, and trimming and trampling the upright snow edge to the width of a slim garden wall.

Soon he was thirty feet out from the start; halfway across, but the rope was tightening between him and June; she must start before he was over. Louis uneasily made himself fast; he adjured her to sit on the

edge, to bestride it and hoick herself on with the hands. "Every one does it," he said, to square her pride; "the best climbers; I myself, often." She did her best not to. "It would make monsieur safer," Louis urged. She weighed that. But, no. Comrades owed not help alone but that help untarnished. She walked lance-straight through mid-air—so it felt—to the midst of the traverse and, planted there, kept fear at bay for ten minutes, second by second, till Browne, now across and on good rock, turned and saw her neck lifting like some gracious symbol of pride.

The pinnacle next was easy; the one after, hard; the one after that, impossible, frontally: Louis must turn its flank cannily. Out of snow-covered ice the pinnacle rose as a lower tooth from a gum, the gum scarcely less steep than the tooth. But, just where the stone tooth rose out of the snow, the snow swelled out, gum-like, a little; not that the ice which it covered was less steep there than below; but a little more snow could cling to it there, by freezing on to the unsunned rock; and so for a couple of feet from the base of the tooth the gum only fell away convex, before dropping sheer. By this hanging shelf the guide set out to steal round the foot of the pinnacle, gingerly stamping the snow at each step until it would form a hard tread, frozen fast to the steep ice beneath. He was well out of sight round the bulge when his shout came for June to come carefully on. She committed herself to his vestiges. Aubrey, well planted, paid out the rope to her frugally. Warily coasting the swell of the tooth she paused where it pushed her out furthest.

"What's it like?" Aubrey called. Could she be giving?

She glanced back, a merry thought curling her lip. "It's like walking on one stilt. It's made of an icicle, with a hard snowball stuck on to its side, and that's the stilt's step." So he saw she had gone clean through fear, if she had felt it, and come out beyond, to the mood in which people say, not "Surely, that's not a ghost?" but "What a fine ghost, to be sure!"

Joyful yells proclaimed Louis restored to the ridge. June, once round the bulge, almost ran up the neat little stairway of steps he had made in the snow to its crest, where he sat gaily reviling the circumvented enemy. "Dog of a *gendarme*!"* he mocked, "and easy, too! But yes! Absolutely!" Louis had courage, not chivalry. June laughed, glad to have him so. In her old thoughts valor had always towered like some regal grace or tall plume. Frigid image, uncompanionable; beside it how good this stout clay that blood warmed, all common, sun-baked and dust-stained, that laid on in fight like a good one, and boasted about it when done, and kicked at the slain like a triumphing child!

Soon they lost count of separate towers topped or turned. Above, there never seemed to be fewer to pass; indeed, sometimes more; each time that the next stretch of ridge became aquiline, file after file of new pinnacles moved into sight as the climbers surmounted the convexity; points that had looked as if

*The slang term of mountaineers for a pinnacle of rock standing on a ridge.

the summit were there became taking-off places for fresh upward leaps of the old spiky edge. The three, from their black-frozen north, where no icicle lost hold, looked out of Greenland into the Tropics. What a noon must be blazing, up there! While a wet glove cased hard on the hand, they saw the highest turret-tops bleach and ache in a shimmer of heat on a sky blue as skies in a song.

"Much more of it, Louis?" asked Aubrey.

The guide gave the shrug of a guide. "Were the ridge in condition—perhaps forty minutes. At present—two hours, perhaps four, who knows?"

The ridge was not in condition. Each chink in the rocks had been stuffed with the flying flakes of some snowstorm; the tiniest ledge had held its white pat, with wind-beveled edges; and then these had half melted and then refrozen. They were now ice, and on these ledges capped with their little ice-cushions, the party must find or make foothold; in those ice-choked clefts they had to rummage for hold for their fingers.

Meal-time had come round. Huddled under a rock, lest stones or ice fall from above, where the sun was at work, they crouched on their heels; they ate and drank and their souls enjoyed good in their labor. What a savor the salt had; what goodness, to June, the villainous red wine! They drank, two by two, to the health of the third; it seemed natural. In the world there were only three persons; all day their three lives were being laid, turn by turn, in the keeping of each, and held safe there with passionate care, and then

handed on, with lightsome trustfulness, to the next. While they ate they said trivial things with a kind of blithe gravity. All meals—the saying is old—are sacraments really; only some vulgarization of them, or of us, repels us at most times; we cannot communicate. This time there came no frustration.

CHAPTER V

“Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?”

Job xxxviii. 22.

EACH pinnacle now seemed worse than the last. Two hours on from the place of their meal came the hardest of all. It rose eighty feet from the ridge, which was here of pure ice, blue and hard, its crest about as wide as a plank. There was no going round that pinnacle; right and left its sides fell smooth and sheer into ice almost as sheer. Straight in front, too, attack would be hopeless. The pinnacle straddled across the ice plank, barring it, bulging out far to each side of it, much as a chimney-stack does on the ridge of a roof. For the first twelve feet of its height, just where the plank led up to it, not a wrinkle of roughness diversified the vertical stone.

There was only one chance. As far away to the right as a tall stride from the ice plank might reach out through space, Louis descried on the pinnacle's face a ledge an inch wide and some eight inches long; not a flat ledge, alas!—it sloped outwards a little and had a poor edge; but there was no choice. And, five feet above the ledge, two nearly upright fissures, ten inches apart from each other and each about an inch wide, could be seen; for a couple of feet they ran upwards till one of them widened to five or six inches. And, yet two feet higher, this fissure held in its clutch

a small stone, lodged there during some downfall of broken rock from above.

Sitting thirty feet off on the last rock before the plank bridge, they considered it all. Could a hand only get at that little jammed stone nine feet up! Were it once grasped you might hang from it, safe while your grasp held. And, while it held, sharp nails on the inner edge of a right boot, thrust well out once more to the right, might bite on another minute excrescence of rock, another three feet out over space. If the nails bit, the hands might then be invited to quit the jammed stone, their one comfort and stay in the passage, and grope for projections to grip, or depressions to occupy, in certain bas-reliefs out, again, to the right, and higher. Fondly remembered by Louis as having lain within his reach when his right foot, in some other year, had trusted itself to that second excrescence of rock, these reliefs were now buried under the lower end of a ribbon of loose snow that seemed to run up, curving spirally round, towards the ridge at the back of the tower, the party's one aim in life. Could they once gain that snow, Louis averred, they were made; beneath it were all sorts of good things. Trust him—were he there he would stick his claws into all that would be wanted.

They stood by for the venture. Louis walked the plank of ice first, and then June. At its far end she stood at his back, ready to close in and wait, steadied against the pinnacle's base, as soon as he quitted the ridge. Should he slip, and so fall down the right-hand precipice, she was to jump down the one on the

left, that so they might both come to rest, hung to the ridge by the rope, like a donkey's two panniers. Browne was not to cross yet, but sit fast; with a turn of the rope twisted round a good firm wart of rock, he would now be the caravan's saving point of adhesion to absolute fixity. Also, while Louis climbed, Browne, thus posted afar, would watch and might tell him of boons to be reached by a groping finger-tip, out of its owner's sight.

First, leaning out from the ridge, the guide, with his extended ax, chipped the ice off the first one-inch ledge; he picked some out, too, but not much, from the fissures above. He then slung his ax to his wrist and glanced back at Browne. "You're fixed?" he asked, almost severely.

Browne patted the stone wart and nodded.

"Eh, well—" said Louis and made the big step.

With pricked ears that read sounds like print, June heard the rim of serrated steel round Louis' sole grind as it bit on the tiny ledge; then give, with an ominous scrape, for some infinitesimal distance upon it; and then, finding an answering roughness, bite and hold fast, while the guide, in the same swinging movement, drew off his left foot from the ridge, reached up with both hands, and committed the good of the cause to what he might find in the two upright cracks. Then the fighting began. Louis climbed with a wrestler's quick, felicitous cunning at seeing the way to a new grip, its use, and the time when its use would be past. At one moment his arms would be crossed, and what clamped him on to the vertical rock was only the

lateral pressure and counter-pressure of two open palms pulling in towards each other from opposite sides of an upright lamina of stone; at another he used only one of the vertical cracks for both hands, making as if to tear it wider open, his fingers straining outwards sideways against its two opposite walls; and once, as he went higher, he seemed to have no describable handhold or foothold at all, but to plaster himself to the crag by the aggregate friction of elbows, knees, toes, chin and palms, all nuzzling into shallow depressions of its surface and feeling out any square inch of more merciful gradient.

To June, standing steady on guard, there had come now the exaltation of sober sense that danger brings to the unafraid. In half-seconds she saw whole ranges of practical things and could think out long trains of cause and effect, compare and speculate; an instant gave infinite leisure; time, the old fetter, was knocked off the mind. One trifle she noticed was how, on that first ill-sloping inch of stone ledge, Louis' boot had come down not square but with a slope too, its sole parallel to the ledge's surface. Was that why it slipped, just a little, at first?

"It's the right way;" Browne's voice came across as she wondered. Odd—another obstruction gone too? Did thought pick up thought without the old signaling? "Gives the boot more bite," he said. "More nails get a go at it."

She nodded, rejoicing at Louis, to see how each trooper in that battalion of sinews could mind its own work, and the captaining wits be left free to make for

this opening or that, like a chief who has only to run on ahead at the enemy, knowing the breath of his men will be hot on his neck as he draws near the trenches. And all through the fight the guide pshawed, groaned and swore to himself, making it up to his spirit, for any pangs of daring in action, with free leave to wallow in over-expression of fear and disgust, as some surgeons will grunt and snarl their way through big operations, or soldiers go blenching or blubbing into an action that wins them a cross.

Once begun, the bout had to go quickly. Merely to cling to the rock by such holds was hard work; to hoist by them, harder; no one could keep it up long. Besides, every grasp was on rock glazed with ice; the climber raced oncoming numbness; the difficulty must be passed before fingers lost feeling. And now Browne saw that Louis was going to be checked. He had reached the lower end of the ribbon of snow, but he was only mounting it slowly and painfully, digging his fingers and boot-toes searchingly in, but seeming nowhere to find what he sought. He had overrated their chance. The holds he had thought to find under the snow were masked in ice; till he was twenty feet higher, at least, the most he could do—if he could do that—would be not to slip; he could nowhere stand squarely enough to resist any pull on the rope from below. And already the rope was straightening between him and June. Soon it would tighten. Five feet more and the guide would be held back, clinging to some frozen crevice or knob with fingers themselves freezing fast. The girl must then start up the worst

piece of all with no chance of help from the rope from above; worse—with a certainty that if she slipped she would drag the guide off. Then the two would fall backwards through the air, till the rope held by Browne would grow taut—for one instant only; even the best ropes have limits of strength.

One thing, he saw, could be done. The whole length of their rope, being more than double the length of the part between Louis and June, would give the guide freedom to climb nearly up to the ridge and to find on the way, if he could, some square foot of flat rock or snow. Planted there, with the rope in both hands, if they were still able to feel it, Louis might stand a fair strain. It would mean Browne's quitting their one firm anchorage. Still—

“All right there?” he asked June.

“Splendid.” Her voice had a kind of glow.

“Good. I'm coming.”

He walked the plank swiftly and faced her, he poised on the ice ridge, she leaning her back against the tower. “Louis needs rope,” he said; “may I untie you?”

She worked the knot round on her chest into reach of his hand. What a knot!—evil in kind and now frozen rigid.

“Oh, Louis, Louis!” Browne apostrophized under his breath as he tugged and picked at the tangle of petrified hemp. “How he loves that wicked old over-hand knot!”

“The dear goose!” June chid too, as over a nice, naughty child. Both could speak thus, each knowing

the other loyal in mind to the comrade fighting above.

The knot gave at last, but only a little, and Louis had climbed on, meanwhile, to the end of his tether; the rope came down taut; not even so much of slack was left as was needed to loosen the knot completely and run the loop large, so as to lift it up over June's arms. Twenty seconds would finish the job, but not without ten or twelve inches more play in the rope; and now Louis was straining up on it as though every inch more it could yield was a lift towards deliverance. They stared about with one quest in their eyes; was there no stone, no lump of snow or ice, nothing to raise up her feet those few inches for those twenty seconds?

"Bend your knee. I'll stand on it," she suddenly said.

He could not reject the risk for her. They were like one person now, a staunch one, in whom the members do not tremble one for another. She found means to hold fast while he closed in and pressed a bent knee to the rock, and then to step up and stand on his leveled thigh; she balanced deftly, one hand capping the ball of his shoulder and one pressed flat against the smooth rock. Twenty seconds?—they did it in ten. June had the noose slipped over her head and one arm, and half over the other, when Louis' voice, sharp with anxiety, came to them. "Sir, I can hold here no longer. I *must* have more rope. Untie the young lady."

"It's done, Louis. Pull away—much as you like," Browne shouted; and June, from her perch on his knee, looked up, calling, "Oh, well climbed, Louis!

Well climbed!" before Browne, with both hands on her waist, set her down like a rose-vase too full of water. She was unroped—a torment to him to see. "Well played, you! Well played, you!" he kept murmuring as he undid the knot tying himself at the end of the rope and tied June there instead, to be ready to start on a call from above.

It came soon. The guide, once let out of the leash, had gone fast. A falsetto whoop of delight, a wild scraping on rock by boot-nails which some solid hand-hold had set free from care, and a shower of snow kicked away from the long-coveted platform—all brought the news of a fortress taken. June set out, exulting to move again. Browne could steady her off from the ridge; the tip of the shaft of his ax, stretched out to rest on the first minute ledge, made the footing there sure. Above it the tip of the ax could still, for a few feet, be pressed up under a groping boot. But she needed help little. In five minutes more she was niched beside Louis on two square feet of flatness, undoing her end of the rope with numb hands—Louis' were too numb now—to let down to Browne. Its frozen kinks came to him dancing and curling in air and, sped by the guide's entreaty to come fast, lest their hands be frost-bitten, he tied on in haste, went off with a rush and, on reaching the little stone jammed in the crack, did not wait to grasp at it from its own rear and base and so jam it only the more with his pull. He grabbed at its top from outside and it came right out in his hand: he hung from the rope.

"Oh, Louis, I'm sorry," he groaned. His body

began to rotate, spit-fashion, horribly. Then the rope gave a little, and then he saw the guide's look of dread as it slipped yet another inch through his dead fingers.

Above the point on the rope where Louis held it a coil of it lay at June's feet. There was that much to slip through his fingers, and then—

"Can you—?" The guide looked half round, but June was before him—had twisted the rope, eighteen inches above where he held it, round both of her hands and was pulling up hard and straight from her heels, as an oarsman drives from the stretcher. Browne saw her face, busy and set, behind Louis' aghast one, and then the rope held; the four hands could just do it. Three seconds more and Browne, swinging round with a jerk to get his face to the rock, had thrust both hands, open and edgewise, into the two upright cracks and then clenched his fists till each hand was a lump large enough to stick fast in the narrows.

"Right. Slacken a little," he called. Bending his elbows the little he could, he drew up his body some three or four inches, unclenched and took out his left hand and again put it into the crack and reclenched it, those three or four inches higher, then drew up his body again and took out the right hand, and did it all again, till at last a foot swung out to the right could find hold. Not much of the skin of his knuckles was left to complain when he reached his friends and found Louis rubbing June's right hand with snow. Browne groaned again, to see the groove the rope had indented there, and how the flesh did not spring up when released.

She was quelled by the cold, quelled past trusting her voice to sound buoyant. They all were. Oh, to be out of that bitter black North—icy rock, rocky ice, and that brutal pain in their fingers, an indistinct ache as of crushed limbs; it bruised the spirit.

They re-roped in order and made their way on in dead silence, each of their cowed hearts keeping its numbness all to itself, lest it discourage the hearts that each felt to be still uncowed in the others. June did not look up; it seemed to be of no use; it was so long since there had ever been sun in the world. Once, as they struggled on over more of the old rocky teeth, she had a queer fancy that some rock she touched with her left hand was warm. Luxurious fancy! She checked it, almost in fear—was she growing light-headed? Why, they were in shadow, in midwinter rigors; Louis, above her, was audibly cutting steps up a slant of hard ice, their old enemy. “Canst thou not suffer and be silent?” June tried to say to herself, over and over, like a prayer, holding despair off with the words. Droning it, with her eyes on her feet, she heard, as sounds fail away while a doze becomes sleep, the hacking of Louis’ ax growing less loud, the strokes slower, more wide apart; they stopped; a rustling noise, short, crisp, delicious, heard long ago in some happier time, had succeeded them. Starting, she looked up; she saw Louis, transfigured in sunshine, stroll up a soft white bank bejeweled like dewed grass, and then her own face was in heaven’s good warmth, bathed in it.

Louis was turning, his face one repose of beatitude.

"We are arrived!" Louis said. Where he stood the last incline died off on the crown of a huge cap of snow, the roof of the mountain. It swelled, rose and fell, like a down, a genial, incredible, softly-rolling world to be found at the tip of that ladder thrust up into the air.

CHAPTER VI

"What must be the delight of a mind rightly touched, to gaze on the huge mountain masses for one's show, and, as it were, lift one's head into the clouds! The soul is strangely rapt with these astonishing heights."

CONRAD GESNER.

THEY dropped on the snow; every muscle ran slack; the rope lay out loose; from rucksack and pockets they spilt food, maps, bottles, corkscrews, pell-mell, for the joy of doing things carelessly. There they sat or lay, glorious, luxurious, replete with mere remission of tensity, taking long, leisurely pulls at the great tankard of their achieved safety: it bubbled and sparkled.

"What o'clock?" June asked, out of depths of indifference. "Is it eleven yet? Hardly."

Louis smiled toward the sun.

"Three forty," said Browne. They all laughed. So time goes when you live.

Louis half-heartedly put it that even the easy way down, which they meant to take, needed daylight. The others derided him.

"Eh, well!" said Louis, and lit a pipe blissfully. No flame from the struck match was seen in the sunlight; only a quiver of smoke rising over it—straight, the air was so still.

"Cost what cost, we must stay awhile," June smiled to Louis, who wished to learn English.

The world, now a conquest of theirs, lay out below like a great map spread on a floor. Almost under the lowered sun Mont Blanc stood obtuse amidst arrowy peaks, like a house among poplars. Eastward the Matterhorn's bent tip, monstrous, a whim, and a child's whim, not an architect's, brazened it out, its queer distinction killing lovelier rivals. Along the Rhone valley's dark trench the eye felt its way down forty miles till it hit on a speck of the Lake of Geneva's blue. Eighty miles away snows on the Dauphiny Mountains were shining, hoisted into mid-air on black plinths. And southward the whole Lombard plain stretched and lengthened out, endless, dim with deepening purples of farness and of evening.

Browne picked out a point that he knew in the Maritime Alps; it showed through a gap in the Graians. "From there," he told June, "when the air has been well washed with rain, you see Corsica—only a blur, of course, rising out of the level shine when the sun's on the Mediterranean." He turned, searched the north, and found the dorsal fin of an Oberland mountain. "From up there you see the Black Forest—right into Germany."

She gazed and gazed, thrilled with the feel of a new reach in the one sense which up here was at work, where all was blank for the rest. The last scent had died off behind them eight hours ago, at some grass with orchises on it; the last sound not made by themselves—the creak of a chough or some scared marmot's whistle—had come scarcely higher. Sight's own task had been simplified; not busy now with the near,

tumbled riches of lowlands, it put forth its strength on sheer distance, and, stirred by its own strength and drunk with it, took on new powers and visions of powers.

"See that dip?" Browne pointed north-eastward. She saw. "The St. Gotthard is there. The Rhine and the Rhone and the Po are all there, scrambling for water. It's thrown them like coppers; Adriatic and North Sea fight for a snowflake."

June stared as one stares at the fire and tries to recall some old view and to think out a path for the eye through the banked mists that had bounded it. Now the path opened; the bodily eye seemed aware of more and yet more, till June could not tell sight from reverie. Europe was lying before her unrolled; she stood at its center and saw the mills there grind the powder that spread Holland out on the sea and let Venice rise from it; reaching across to where the Bernina gleamed high in the East, she could lean over pools where the waters are gathered that moat Bulgaria and carry the grit that redraws the Black Sea. Rivers appeared in all their lengths, with their adventures, their dawdlings and hastenings; the Rhine, after all its swayed ferry-boats, lazy at last among tulips and windmills; the Danube constricted to tear past Belgrade and Vienna, between speeding walls, like a horse breaking through a cordon. "What's that?" she cried.

The roar of a far-off explosion was reaching them, dreamy and bodiless first, and then rounding and hardening into fullness. A rattle of minor artillery fol-

lowed it, each crack, again, muffled at first as if some muting membrane enwound it.

"See! On Mont Bouquetin!" Louis pointed.

Browne added, "Low down—near the glacier by now."

Through a mile and a half of quivering glare June saw a trail of black specks fall pausingly, second by second, down a ledged precipice. "The everlasting hills!" said Browne. Slowly the commotion ended; the spilt scuttle of coal—so it looked—was coming to rest at the foot of the crag, spoiling a snowfield. "A thousand tons less of the Bouquetin now!"

Long after all was at rest, to the eye, the last blurred report of rock smashing on rock droned across through the heat to them. Then stillness twice as still as before settled on all the immobile, glittering desert of stone and snow, rising and falling, falling and rising. June had felt something—not learnt, but felt; all of the earth that seems hard and lasting was tumbling away, over there, into rubbish; she saw the hills as they are—a last ruin almost, and how the tips of to-day's peaks had lain in black bottoms of valleys. Something befell her; time went the way space had gone; it shrank into a thing excitingly small; fancy could grasp it and play with it here, where the work of a million quarrying frosts and suns lay out to be seen like a stone-breaker's finished heap by a road.

Ecstasy caught her; the earth's convexity seemed a thing real to sense; the foot braced itself to it; the eye felt a glee at it; poised on the ball spun in space, June held her breath with delight at its revolution.

And then with a sudden tenderness she espied something. Down the bed of a valley a railway, a road and a stream twisted their triple cable, the strands plaiting over and under. It moved her oddly; the two tiny threads, carefully fitted in with the third, had the touching dearness of children's minute and fugitive engineering. What was it that had put bars till now between her and such good pangs and pleasures? Between her, too, and her comrades of all times in this place, her peers in drawing the lot for this high adventure of being alive, ever since Alps were first Alps? Where were the passes, she asked gaily, eagerly—where were the old famous passes over to Italy?

“Which of them first?” Browne asked. He looked at her in wonder. Her mouth, like a bud long kept back, had broken into incredible bloom, a rose with the many curves of all its soft-lipped petals not fixed and assembled, but changing, successive, melting curve into curve.

“The Mont Cenis, please.” She had heard of it most.

He picked out two pretty high points in the distant south-west. “The road runs just below them, a little beyond them.”

They fell to work, taking light from each other's excitement; they set trains and pomps of old travelers tramping across—Frankish kings on their way to be crowned, and Holy Roman Emperors and other great ones of the earth—Louis the Pious drawing rein on the top of the pass and founding the guest-house, and Charles the Bald dead on the way. Neither knew any

history, to speak of; only, in each of their minds, some visible fact had stuck, here and there, at some time or other, and then lain forgotten; now these emerged from the closet, turned into morsels of livid, tingling experience. The two capped reminiscences shyly, afraid of swaggering.

"Didn't Henry the Fourth go that way to Cannossa?" she asked, like a born Catholic.

Browne could believe it. And people, four hundred years later, tobogganed. "A Duchess of Saxony—fancy some dragonsome dowager—tearing across in the snow, to help a Duke of Burgundy, was it? She slid from the top down to—Lanslebourg, isn't it?"

She laughed. He had wanted her to, that the rose might curl more petals. He looked at them. "Then, a mere hundred years after, Montaigne," he added, when only to look would begin to be rude.

She grew serious again. "And, all the time, pilgrims—long chains of black spots on the snow, both ways, in and out—drawn in on Rome and sent out from it, as people's blood is—" She stopped, her little figure of speech taking fright at itself. So she looked a little august again, and remote. She always did when alarmed or abashed.

He did not know that. He only saw what looked like a gesture of quick withdrawal into dim inner recesses of orthodoxy. So that was her line, he reflected lightly. He gave her time to come out; then they began the game over again, picking out a fresh pass; the Genèvre it was, a nick in a ridge a great way off; they romped through the sights you might have seen, if

you had sat there by the road, with time done away with—Cæsar's bald crown, damply beaded perhaps, coming up into sight, on his way to the taking of Gaul; and drift on drift of rug-headed Lombards surging across; and then the Franks pushing them back; and Charlemagne crossing, it might be, to take in old Lombardy; "and the Pope, Innocent the ——" Browne was rollicking on.

"A Pope up there?" June checked for an instant: the petals drew in as anemone petals will do, even for a light cloud.

"A Pope and an Emperor," Aubrey rushed on, to blow the cloud away; "Frederick the First and a king or two—Charles the Eighth was it?—to fall upon Italy; Louis the Thirteenth with Richelieu beside him; and then a short pause, and a French army swings up the road; it's off to Magenta, Solferino."

Europe's life marched in serried procession; it had the color and clangor of one pageant, gone through in an hour, as Europe's whole face had come within sight, and the make and whirling of the earth into reach of the body's senses. In that world transfigured into radiant coherence they sat god-like, fingering their treasures, till some peak a mile off in the west threw a shadow that stole up the snow to their feet. Not two hours till dark! Louis was fidgeting.

With stiff, happy muscles they stumped away over the dome to its southern edge and began to lower themselves, ledge by ledge, down a rude natural staircase, ruined and rock-strewn, leading down some thousands of feet. Browne went first now, Louis last. They all

fell silent again as they plodded on, only with some jocund word of companionship now and again, blithe like a lamp lit in early twilight. Then the light thickened, and the silence, and in the silence the reinsulation of minds began. June felt a grasp giving way, helplessly; could she not keep any hold on that unturbid and lightsome world? Would it be all gone that night when in bed she tried to live back through the day? Was it going from Browne, too, she wondered? She peered at what she could see of him—only some short curling hairs that had looked fair just now on the back of a neck burnt brown. If the vision were failing him, too, she was sorry and wished she could help; and then in a spasm of angry shame she struck her wish down. To think she could help, or had any part in it all! Vanity, vanity! Why, it was his eye that made things over again; what you saw with his help was like what poets had worked on, or legends grown to; it rose to the state of things primal or storied; his mind took in a thought and appareled it, somehow, by that very act with glamour or grandeur or magical simpleness. What might it not do, that power? Not merely things seen and touched might now be fallen from grace and waiting in rust and dust till the mind came that could break on them like the dawn, that both sees life and gives it. Courage, control, charity, faith—no, he had not religion; she knew by his courtesy when their talk neared it. But if he did ever have it—

Their way was a zigzag now; in the last of the light his face was in profile at one moment, then it came full

and then turned away again. If one were dead and in some pallid heaven it would be good to escape for a moment and see a face red and brown like poppies in corn, and eyes with lids dropped at the outer end a little, as if with looking through wind and rain into distance, and wrists where the joint was a modeled steel nut among swart, hairy straps, and a neck that indexed a fit frame's whole volume of litheness. She stumbled and, flushing unseen in the dusk, recovered herself quickly and tried to fasten her eyes on the path. But she looked on at Browne now and then: she had to: she had to verify things about him—to see what was well made and what not; well or ill, they were all rather touching, somehow, because they were just what they were, as a baby's face is, for better or worse. Soon it was only one outline she saw, and then none; it was dark; they had relit the lantern and Louis and Browne had changed places.

Nine o'clock and the inn still a good hour off. Ten, and the turn of a corner brought its lights into sight, some of them fixed, some four or five not; these swung, rose and fell, flitting this way and that about the inn door; one dived into darkness and then re-emerged with two more beside it. All must be carried in hand by a gathering company.

Louis sniffed wrathfully. "Euh! A search party! Sheep sent to look for lost sheep!" He yodeled derision; alas! unheard, for the flitting lights drew into a group and then out into a line, a relief-column mobilized.

Louis ran over its probable units biting: cook of

the inn; under-boots—"Crétin de première force, je vous dis franchement!"; head waiter—"boule de suif, absolument!"; the brother of Mademoiselle; and the good God alone knew what poor creatures besides, "and to rescue—*me*, for example!" But how to stop the imbeciles? "Monsieur, assist me!" He waved the lantern aloft, and all the might of his indignation put itself into a bawl, Browne chiming in soulfully.

The lights below ceased to move. Their stricken immobility made each, to June, a symbol; it stood for a figure listening with held breath. Louis improved his advantage by letting a yell that tore almost a visible rent in Night's tympanum.

That did it: through space an answering shout could be felt slowly winging; it came spent and small. By now all intentness was gone from the lanterns yonder. Some of them waved a response; all of them moved, but not as before. The face of a remitted purpose was drawn on the darkness with the same pen of light that had drawn the braced look of a muster and then the strained air of listeners. To June it was thrillingly legible. Was it not?—she was about to ask Browne, but stopped. Bars that were melted at noon were re-forming now, as icicles were. Browne stood a little behind the lantern; silhouetted black, square, monumental, he seemed withdrawn into enigma. She left it unsaid, and they tramped on. Louis was silent too, dourly figuring that under-boots to himself and maturing jibes for emission at supper-time.

Two of the lanterns came up a few hundred yards

to meet theirs. One was in Guy's hand. "Unhappy young people!" his flute voice purled like one of the many streams that had come into hearing again as they descended; "a few minutes more and the emotions of rescue were ours! The *chef* was translated; the eyes of the under-boots had strange lights. And lo! you are safe all the time and our unheroism repossesses us."

"My dear rash young lady, the fright that you've given us!" This came from the other lantern.

June turned in surprise. "Father Power! You here!"

"At your bidding." His voice had a tinge of remonstrant austerity.

"Oh, do forgive me!" She had the contrition of one at last fully waked, for the first incoherences of arousal. "Tell me—about all this horribleness at Cusheen."

"To-night! And you famished!" The priest's voice was kind again.

"Yes—now."

Browne, lingering at good-nights with Louis, heard her insist. Two minutes later he trailed his battered feet down the inn's long matted corridor, now a delicious tunnel of warm light, bored into the mountain night's solid, cold darkness. Through a door on one side he saw June, with her tired eyes hugely, lucently dark, leaning over a sitting-room table, her back crushed under its load of exhaustion. She seemed to be importuning the priest. Under the hanging oil lamp her wide mountain hat half shadowed her face into mystery. Hearing his step she looked up, rose

and said good-night and thanked him—"for *such* a good day," with the civil stress formally lavished, as if the lamplight dazed comradeship.

"What's this they're like?" he thought to himself, meaning her dilated eyes. Something it was that he knew; it had attracted him once, or often. He went to bed fumbling to find the lost likeness, and then thought he had it, but was not sure. They had gleams like deep water awash under lamp-lighted bridges on summer nights, when it seems good to dive into and swim in. Was that it, or was she like some one he seemed to know better than any one else in the world?—yet he could not think whom. He fell asleep with it unsettled.

CHAPTER VII

"The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty."
Psalm lxxiv. 20.

THE priest had been fencing. "We'll talk it all over to-morrow," or "Wait and we'll have a great talk in the morning," the fatherly man of forty-five had replied to June's queries.

But June, like a child excited and tired past sleep, grew fluent, elate, tried to find ways round his guard, told him how she had been shown where the old pilgrims' road ran, over the snows. "It's still now, up there; only the hot air quivering over the old roads to Rome; no one on them—only that glass-colored shiver, like a flame made out of water. It seemed like an old thing burnt out, and all the time you were down there in the train, rushing towards Italy." Almost light-headed, she tried to be cunning, as tipsy men do.

He saw through it: any one could. "Ay, and a right tired pilgrim. You'll let him rest now?"

"I'm sorry. I didn't think. Just tell me one thing."

"About your poor bedesmen in Connaught?"

"Just how they were when you left?"

"God help them! But wait till the morning."

"But, Father—"

"To bed with you! Off, now!"

"I will, only—"

"Only you'd argue the point with your priest."

"No, but—did you know?—there's the man here that Cusheen belongs to?"

"How wouldn't I know, and I just after—? No, not a word till the morning."

"Guy knows Mr. Newman. They were out here while father and I were in Italy. I made a plan. I asked Guy to meet us. I hoped he might bring Mr. Newman. He did, and then I wrote off to beg you to come."

"The diplomacy of you!"

"I thought, if some one could tell Mr. Newman—"

"You've been at him?"

"I!" She glowed, a fierce Daphne. She canvass the satyr! But she made allowances. "You haven't met him."

"That have I, these few hours back." She looked at him quickly; there were things, then, that, priest as he was, he could not see so surely as she.

He had a light too. He saw her seeing, and guessed what she saw and all that it meant. "You've a right," he said, "to feel as you did, and I with the thumbs of me pricking and he a perch off." Official omniscience must learn as it goes. "You must leave him to me to deal with." By this time he felt, in good faith, that it had been he that espied the goat legs, and she that had missed them, as maidens, no doubt, ought to. "The fact is, I hope that—"

"Yes?" She settled to listen.

He laughed, not to be caught. "You'd wheedle me on till I'd have it the weight of the world on my mind that I'd talked the life out of you. Come now."

She fell into place at last, like a child long drilled, under his benedictive hand. "Good-night to you now," he said with an authentic paternal goodness, rather touchingly out of place on comely features that had not quite done with their youth. "The blessing of God be upon you and stay with you."

June laid to rest limbs content with sane weariness; with them the mind too fell backwards gently. Once, for a moment, her whole body shuddered uncontrollably; she had recalled a look of Newman's that flashed into her mind a sudden knowledge of how Moors price slave-girls, and Newman's smile when he talked to herself—a smile not at anything said at the time, but at something implied, as it seemed, to underlie all speech between young women and men, some horrible winking of whole sex at whole sex, a jauntily-hinted collusion between demure female lures and leering male readiness. There in the dark her face burned loathingly. Yet—oh, assuaging thought, to wash the bespattered mind white—she *knew* now that a girl of her age and a strange man of Newman's could be in a wild together, all through a long day that assayed them both in some new way in each of its changeful hours, and the girl not once feel that her sex was deranging comradeship. Knowledge of that kept the earth clean; it preserved the stars.

Guy, restored to his sphere, the terrace, had brought together there the parish priest of Cusheen and its owner. "And how're the wicked husbandmen?" Newman had genially asked.

The priest took a measuring look at him. "That's what he's like, then?" the look might have meant. "You heard," he said, "of the hunger, a year back?"

"Hunger? Don't you believe it."

"Ah! You were there?" You could not have told it was not serious, eager inquiry.

"I! I was not. I've a use for my life. But there wasn't a shot at Dan Joyce—you know Joyce, my agent?—the whole blessed winter, and that's what they do, the first thing, as soon as they're peckish."

Guy was beginning "My dear sir—" to Newman. It seemed a waste not to let a light into his mind—so as to find out what he would make of a hint of the way that pastors regard murder done by their lambs.

But the priest's humility was much too proud to take help against an infidel's boorishness. He made a very slight opening movement with one hand, as if to let fall through its fingers such specks of stray dirt as the Newmans of this world; he went on, persistently suave. "Mr. Newman, if you could be with us there, but for the length of a day—"

"Last day I'd be anywhere, eh? No, sir; I let 'em the land; I didn't promise to throw in the shootin'."

Any scorn that may have blazed inside Father Power was smokeless. He raised no protest beyond going on from that word of his own at which this being had failed—"you'd see the potatoes are rotted, and they not ripe."

"A man takes the risks of his business," said Newman, his chronic smile stiffening as if it might end set fast as a rigid sneer or bare-toothed snarl.

Still no tang of asperity soured the priest's tongue. "I'm told," he said, "the great landlords in England take a share in the risks of the farmers." An old hand with the froward, he went about Newman, he tried to get in, as though into a house shut in his face, patiently trying each window. So; that one was fast; he went to the next. "There isn't the food in the place, nor money to buy it—and pay the rent too."

"Don't fear for me. We'll shake the rent out of 'em."

"But," Guy was beginning, fearing a too early end for this engaging passage of arms, "if the stone really is bloodless—" when Newman cut cheerfully in.

"Joyce and I'll manage, so long as there's no 'humane' bleaters about."

"I've the fear," said the priest, "that you'll have half the land on your hands."

But Newman was off on a trail of his own. "Only last Christmas some sickener from England came nosing round at evictions. Contracts!—oh, he'd not heard of them. 'Barbarity'—that was his game. I heard he had the wickedness to snivel about it in some rag, up in the Black Country."

"Eh?" said Guy, playfully anxious.

"The *Northerner*—that was the name."

Guy enacted chagrin. "My heart told me. Newman, 'tis mine—three-sixteenths of it."

"Keep 'em away from the other thirteen, then, or you'll have 'em mangy."

"Your idea of property's rights is one-sided, my friend." Guy's eyes roamed the air; his voice was the

very breath of idly provocative thought. "Think. May not a paper, too, be some poor soul's, and that soul have its yearning, also, for revenue—revenue not to be had, perhaps, if the paper be not endeared to yet other poor souls by giving them something to cry about?"

"Well, I don't want to be hard. Let 'em cry about me when no one plays up with the rents."

"Did you know," Power asked, "that all the rent paid you last Christmas was found by that English reporter—the 'sickener'?"

"That's interesting," Newman said, with an air of preparedness to face any nonsense that came. Guy liked this duel between two contrasted forbearances.

Power continued: "The people in England, away in the north, when they read what he said of the state we were in, made a fund up among them and sent it to me, and no sooner had each of the tenants his share of the cash than off he'd be to your agent to have the rent paid and be done with it."

"Oh, they're great people. They'd not draw a pound from the bank—"

"Is it savings, and they eating grass!" The priest all but broke bounds.

"When they're sick—I believe you. They'd not walk to Tubber post-office to draw out the bit they owe, but they'd cadge on poor, soft-hearted lambs over here. Well, they're free men, and I ain't a tyrant. As long as I'm paid I don't care how they get it."

"You don't?" the priest asked, with intention.

"I do not."

"You'd not be against it?"

"I'd not take the trouble."

"Joyce did, last winter. He put a taboo on the *Northerner* man till there wasn't a bed or a car he could get in the place."

"He's a great mind, is Joyce."

"No, but it's you are magnanimous. Joyce put a stop to a job that was doing you more good than any one. Three-fourths of the rents the man from the *Northerner* got out of England, and he'd not have rested until he'd got all, and arrears, and food for the people, if Joyce could have let him alone. I ask, would you have him impeded again if he came back to-morrow?"

"Well—?" It was Newman's pride that no passion, however sacred, should keep back from birth whatever might live to be good business.

"I don't say he will," the priest said, "after the way he was treated. Only, it's autumn now, the time English papers can't tell what on earth to be at, and they wanting to seem fit to read. God knows but we might find one that would quit asking what age to marry, or why go to church, and would give people all the occasion to cry that anybody could want, with telling the way it is at Cusheen." Something of frailty did cling to the priest; for disdains that he mastered or hid he had to make up to himself with tiny oozings of irony squeezed out now and again.

Guy noticed; it felt as if he had bitten an olive, the epicure. Newman's palate told him of no taste; his mind, though, descried still more clearly what might turn out to be business, the fine gold of business, calling

out to be disengaged from such dross as attended it. "Well," he said, "it depends—for one thing, on which rag it is. Here's our friend owns an eighth of a rag and a little bit over. Now if he'd give the office to all the wild eighths to behave—"

Guy disclaimed power over the *Northerner*. Still he might put up a prayer—he had never done it yet—to the editor. So much he said, for he liked people's plans to go forward; it drew people out.

Newman proved that it did. "What I can *not* stand," he said with some fervor, "is having 'humanity,' that sort of slime, daubed all over the place. I don't so much mind if a tramp comes round begging. You see, it's his game. Even a thief; well, it's all right to set the dog on him; that's *your* game; still, he's sort of a man and a brother; he's playing to win, same as yourself. But to have pure philanthropists poking round—it's the true holy terror. You're not an archangel, thank God"—Guy bowed to the eulogy—"only I want to know where you come in—your paper, I mean—the whole boiling of vulgar fractions. Excuse country manners, but what I say is, if a man's straight you ought to see where he comes in."

Guy reassured him gaily. Had Newman not heard Father Power? What could profit a journal more than to melt readers' hearts and then give them its shoulders to weep upon, at its usual price?

"You think, swelpyergud, it's an asset?"

"Sterling," Guy testified gravely.

"Put it at that, for the moment. Next point—who's your man? Some mad idiot, same as last year,

running down us poor landlords? Or some one who'd not make a beast of himself, but would take a look round with Dan Joyce and go into the facts and put it down fair in the paper, how God hadn't come up to time with the fruits of the earth, and would man kindly see to it? That's good religion. I'm not a pi man, but I'm not against decent religion."

During this allocution the priest practised virtues, and Guy's contentment was flecked by his considerate sense of the priest's pangs of suppression; so it seemed to be for the best that the moment's awkward silence which followed was broken by the all-seeing waiter. "Pardon, messieurs! The caravan, which arrives!" He offered the field-glass again and indicated the top of the Dent Rouge.

It was the moment when June, from their hell of cold, was to see Louis ascend into heaven. The priest found the place with the glass. "I see only flashes of light," he said. "One, then another, another, and they timed like the ticks of a clock. Is it some kind of a signal they're making?"

The waiter, elate to know better, expounded. "The guide's ax. He lifts it; he lets it fall; each time he lifts it the sun strikes the steel."

Two specks of black, Father Power now saw, attended the recurrent gleam. Its flashing stopped suddenly. Then a third speck, Louis, lost till now in the dazzle he made, was black on the snow. The priest turned to Guy. "There are three of them in it?"

"My sister, a guide, and—" Browne, somehow, seemed to need delicate definition.

"A porter?" The priest's voice did not lessen Guy's sense of that need.

"His wicked pride says so," Guy laughed; "an amateur, really."

"Ah! a relation of yours?"

"An Oxford acquaintance of Newman's and mine. 'Driftwood spars,' you know, 'that meet and pass,' as my father would say."

"I see," said the priest, and tried to.

Newman was thoughtful too. Through the glass he watched those three, who were not lame, come to rest like happy gods, uplifted in visionary sunlight, throned on the summit of the earth. A pang of exclusion privily bit the unwhining cripple. They were "in it," not he; it made them "a set," with mutual bonds of their own, each bond a fresh blackball to him. June, by herself, was null to him; Browne was null too; June as a girl whose rank put her beyond casual pursuit, Browne as a poor grotesque, a curio of crazy motives and valuations. Yet the two, so void singly, hurt him together: such pairs needed severance.

"A writer," Guy was telling the priest. Guy had had an idea. Not people only but chance, too, had its humors, its moods, its little fumbings at plans. Let it, too, be helped to do its germs of amusingness justice, such as they were. "A novelist, dramatist, certainly; journalist, possibly." Guy trailed the words temptingly.

One of the trout rose. "Journalist?" Power asked; "on the *Northerner*, is it?"

"Not—yet, that I know of."

"You mean that he might be?"

Guy gave a shrug that said, "How can one tell, in this ramshackle world? But perhaps we might try," and looked around at Newman. So did the priest. Their eyes agreed, up to a point. As Newman lowered the glass Guy began sweetly: "How can you thank Father Power enough? He suggests the redoubtable Browne—"

"Browne?" The priest's voice was sharp.

"Our friend up aloft," Guy explained.

"Yes, yes, yes"—the priest hushed up his own interjection. "Of course the name's common in England."

Guy took up his thread. "He suggests that if Browne were asked nicely he might—with Mr. Joyce's concurrence—do you that service."

"Eh?" Newman was grimly suspensive.

"The friend," Guy softly tripped on, "of your youth; the artist—one who—you hoped, did you not?—might do greater things if he turned, say, to landscape, or *genre*, to pathetic *genre*, than if, mistaking his vein, he labored at portraiture."

Newman stared. It piqued Guy to plant notions in him, floating the seeds to their place on flimsy attached wings of irony. Newman saw only the thistle-down flying, and while he thought "Rubbish!" the seeds rooted.

Guy babbled on, half turning to Power. "For Newman's friend, Browne, what a crisis! He stands at crossways, with uncertain feet, like the hymned maiden. A step to the right and he makes for the fame

of the novelist, satirist, artist in caricature; he lives in London, in Surrey, in the great world, guying its types. A step to the left and he may be shunted into a siding—was it a parting of roads that he stood at just now? Or of waters? Or railways? Newman, in your pure prayers be my poor metaphors remembered. Yet why talk of them in this your moment of distress—your tragic choice for your friend? No, I turn back; I cannot do it; I withdraw Father Power's suggestion; I say to you, 'Pause, Newman, pause; consider how, if the *Northerner* fasten but one claw in your friend, his bright genius, from which you have hoped so much, might be lost to portrait art—wasted, perhaps, in padding for life those stodgy columns in the obscure North."

"You mean, if he slobbers all right on a specimen job—"

"You are hot on the trail of my fear."

"They'd take him on as one of their regular bleaters?"

"Say roarers. They tell of a dearth of young lions. Editors scan the horizon of Libya anxiously."

"Well—" Weighing the matter, Newman looked up again through the glass at the three infinitesimal images of beatified rest. "They're taking their time," he said almost acidly. "When do you want this thing done?"

The priest hid his joy. "I'll be back at Cusheen this day fortnight. Any time then." With a casual air that was very well done he held out a hand for the glass and looked through it. "It's desperately tiring

work for your sister," he said to Guy, putting it down.

"Well, we go home to-morrow," said Guy.

"Is it early to-morrow?"

"The afternoon."

"That's the way. Then there'll be time for your sister to hear all the news of Cusheen. It was for it she brought me."

The deuce she did, Newman reflected. Could nobody let his affairs alone? Still, there were points in this precious plan. It stank, in a way; a sniveling, puling business, it reeked of "good works" in the sniffiest of inverted commas. But rents were rents, come in how they might; land your fish in a butterfly-net, it would still be salmon. And caricature, that new and beastly menace, might be kept off. And that little gang of two up there might be pretty well broken up if Browne could really be shipped off into the North, where no one was heard of, and whites, he fancied, soon sank almost into natives. So the three below, with their variously mixed and qualified cross-wishes and half-intentions, struck up between them a cold league to mature that arrangement, and meanwhile the sun left the tip of the Dent Rouge and the three on it took motion and vanished towards the pit of shadow beyond.

CHAPTER VIII

“Even so quickly may one catch the plague?”

Twelfth Night, I. v.

IT was noon next day before June was alone. From the inn she could see Browne flat on a rock, in the flannels of ease, bathing in mist-filtered sunshine. She had a mission and went to him straight, defying herself to find it hard, or furtively sweet: that way would sentiment lie, the fen of treaclesome slime, a vain trap to set for clear spirits. She would prove that: one clear spirit, with something to ask of another, would ask erectly, with fronting eyes.

She came to it soon. “You’ve seen Father Power?”

He laughed. “Have I not? And your brother, and Newman. Such pulling of wires!—the whole inn creaked.”

He was easier now to talk to; people are, with whom you have faced hardness, even in play. Yet June’s embassy halted. Before she came out she had known what to say; it was framed in her mind, and the words picked. But now mere improvisations pushed in, shoving aside those accredited envoys. “You write?”—an abrupt “You write?”—was one of the interlopers.

“I try,” he said, a little abashed at the stand-and-deliver tone under which she hid tremors: he did not see them.

"To write—what?" The thought crossed her that "Father or Guy would not have said that"; but she stuck to her question. Why not? She had not read a word of his writing.

"That's the trouble," he said.

"To choose?"

"Yes, between the gorgeous impossibilities."

"Impossibilities?"

"Pretty well."

"What are they?" She was sitting; she or her dress made a settling gesture; her clothes seemed to say, "Let us go into this."

He caught her mood cheerfully. "Well; number one—you may write to—to bring news."

"News?"

"What the great ones bring—the big ideas that no one had thought of—new ways of taking things—everything."

"Why not try that?" She smiled, with a wakening sense of seeing what he could not see. Did he not know that he had the touch—that he was king and could cure the evil and raise eyes and ears from the dead?

"To bring news you must have it. I haven't."

"I see." She laughed low, with a quick pleasure. His self-undiscernment was like a child's, and a child can be helped and not help others only. "Well, and the other impossible?"

"That's to bring what isn't news now, though it was—to tell people things that they heard long ago, but don't know, they were told them so dully."

"That mountains are high, and that one sees from them?"

"Yes, and all the copy-book headings shining discoveries, unexplored islands—"

"Sighted from mastheads at dawn." Her face sparkled: her mind took the road with his; it ran on ahead, laughing.

"And even one's country worth liking;" he followed, wondering. Why, she could understand anything, even the simplest things. Wondering, he looked at her. She had her hands round her knees as she sat; one of them held a raised sunshade. Her hat of brown straw had a great brim, not closely woven; jets of light pierced it; and now the sunshade, inattentively held while the talk grew eager, drooped to one side and would half recover itself, and droop again, so that over her face light and shade flickered and chased till her eyes were like water dancing in Venice between sunlit walls, and her cheeks like ripe wheat across which a wind puffs fleet shadows.

Time stopped, for him, as he looked; but to her his long look was physical touch, yet not loathsome. It shook her to find that; she had to withdraw herself, not from the look, but from her own abashed sense that nothing within her resented it. "I have two countries," she said, just to say something, to make a break.

"England and—?" There his voice hung for a moment, lingering out the lease the unfinished speech gave of a right to gaze at those scudding chequers of light and half-light.

Again she broke it off. "Ireland."

"I have them too. Do they fight in you?"

"No," she said offhand; and then, with less sureness, "No. But I was never in Ireland."

"Nor I. And yet, isn't this odd? When you speak it seems as if I had come to some place that I know better than England."

"You feel that, too?" They eyed each other gravely, like children exchanging the marvels of their vast experience, and so the sunshade swayed in a slacker hand and the gleam and shadow flitted the faster over her face till all that was she in it, all that he would have liked to disengage from that fugitive interposed fantasy, showed like a bright thing sunk in rippled clear water; it baffled and broke and challenged and eluded. In their unashamed wonder they looked and looked on, with the web already forming over their eyes that Nature, to gain her own splendid and pitiless immortality, weaves from the red of the rose and the honey of heather to mesh into its service the unconscious senses of her soon-spent butterflies and bees.

"How much are you Irish?" he asked, in a voice that, since he last spoke, had traveled and had experiences.

"Half. It was my mother. And you—how much?"

"Oh, ninety-nine hundredths, no doubt."

She marveled. Only "no doubt"! And that dismissive "Oh" of indifference. "Surely your name isn't Irish," she said.

"The odd one hundredth's name; some trooper of James—or Elizabeth—lost in the bogs."

"Don't you want to find out?" She chafed at his incurious tone; it was part of a naïve classlessness in him, not like her own men's old Whig pose of outwardly equal membership in an implied republic of the elect, but something that seemed, without any malign intention, to show up that quaint concessive irony as a mere masking and mincing class pride. Guy and her father had felt it through all Browne's crudities; it had attracted them; in it their passionless equity saw a thing they had tried to do, only it was done better; and they were not jealous. But June was for them. Why, if they walked on hidden cork legs of race conceit, should any one else have flesh limbs? "Couldn't you hunt up old records?" she too pertinaciously asked; "old registers—the births and marriages?"

"Ours were burnt with the churches, my father said, in the Penal times."

June said, "You were Catholics, then?" her face lighting.

"All, till my father. He changed." The words put out that light, and so he felt like a boor and he had to go on saying something or other; to leave it there seemed too blunt. "I don't know about it exactly; my father would not talk about it—about religion at all. He was generous. He wanted to leave me free."

"Poor little boy!" she exclaimed, with a little flinch of the lip at this picture of infant liberty.

"Oh, I was all right," he said sharply, disclaiming

pathetic interest; his face was hot at the thought that he might have seemed to claim it; that were indeed to be the sorriest sneak of emotionalism—and a fraud, too; what day of his childhood had not been happy adventure?

At his coldness the look shrank with which she had spoken, a look like that of a friendly stranger bending over a child whom some one has left free to earn itself food. So he read it; it seemed oddly easy to read, like a page in a book known long ago. Oh, yes, of course he remembered; his mother had looked like that once. It was after his father's death, when she was slipping back terrified towards the fold that he knew they had left together in their young courage. She had, by a coincidence, used the same words—had said "Poor little boy!" as she kissed him good-night at a time when, as he guessed, some children said prayers. And now he must talk again, and that lightly, to soften the seeming rebuff—what a bungler he was, and his talk a mere train of efforts to mend blunder with blunder! So the next moment he felt he had been too personal, for he had said, "It's curious; you have a look of my mother—a lift of the eyes."

She laughed mercifully. "As if the lower lid had to be climbed by the pupil, for it to see over. Guy always laughs at that trick. But you're wrong. It's *my* mother that gave me it." There a pause left her graver. "It was a wish of hers made me come out to you now." He looked a question. She added, "No; she is dead long ago."

"So is mine."

She waited, feeling her way. He fetched no polite rubbish to fill up the space. When blanks of silence came, in the talk that ensued, they were left to run on until words came again of themselves, as nature lets the underground reservoirs refill at ease for each jet of her intermittent streams. Nor did any abruptness of either's trouble trouble the other much. Swimming together, the thoughts of each dived where they would and came up where they would.

She cast back to where they had started. "You've seen Father Power?"

"Yes, and all the intriguers. They have a great scheme. They all want different things, and two of them—oh, not your brother—are like dog and cat; they stiffen with hating each other, at sight. And yet they make out that if I came into the game, and also some editor up in the North, they'll all win."

"So shall I." She got it out bravely. "I came to ask you to do it."

They waited, and thought worked. "They told you," she presently asked, "all about the starvation?"

"Only a little. It seemed to—pain Newman."

She emitted scorn like a physical ray, a shaft of fierce light with visible edges. As soon as she could she spoke restrainedly.

"Households of people not sleeping all night with the pain of being hungry. Babies crying and crying, the way babies cry for a moment or two in nurseries while a nurse rushes to warm the food for them—only, those babies cry on and on, through whole days. Nothing to give them. Their mothers just wait and

hear the crying grow weaker." Before the angry blaze was quite sunk in her eyes her mouth was tremulous at sight of her own circumstantial vision of these miseries. He thought her arms moved a little, in some rudimentary gesture of nascent instinct, as if to draw in and pillow a small and troubled head on her breast; the unfixed opalesque luster of girlhood deepened itself for the moment to one clear glow, constant and warm, the radiance of something that, like the sun, would mother all children all over the world.

"How you know the place!" Browne said amazedly.

"In a way—yes. I'm never to see it, though. Oh, I can't tell you why," she said, to his look of surprise; she straightened and hardened a little, as some people of spirit do when they call up affronting recollections. An instant of this and again she had herself in hand and could make for her aim. "But I was to help the people there always—my mother wished that—and to get other people to help them. Will *you*?"

What could he do but one thing? She looked at him full, with a noble, frank importunacy, unflinching and unwheeling; the effort was proudly forced to look effortless, almost; only the slightest ruffling of the beauty of her petitioning lips betrayed it; roses full blown and brave, a little vexed by the wind, had that look, he thought. What could he do? Merely to say "Yes" was nothing. He lied hard to make her believe that it was not she that had turned him; his will to unload her of debt to him rushed out to meet half-way her resolve to incur it.

She saw, and had to give, too, what she had, if only a confidence. "Some one," she plunged at it, "did these poor people a wrong; some one close to my mother; at least, one of them was; there were two." She broke off again, with a moment's lapse into small petulance, that of her old, unfired days. She said, "Oh, you can't understand; you aren't a Catholic." Then ruth pricked her again for turning on him the roughness of her own wrestle with her own task. "Oh, I don't mean that; only, it was a baseness. I don't know it all—I don't even know the worst person's name. I was not to. Nobody spoke of them. It was as if they'd been hung for murder."

He could not guess; he scarcely tried to; little the whole enigma mattered to him, except for the flame and the clouds that it brought to the girl's face, and the combats that this and that impulse of frankness and shame and pride and impatience lost or won on that beautiful battlefield. How she changed! Her color *was* changed; not the tint fixed, at least for an hour, on cherries or pinks, but a rising and falling, a beating pulse of tone, not beating by rule—or only by this one, that through every change the blood was true to the emotion; the lights on neck and brow signaled candidly. More; the flush was the very emotion; the look, disdainful or kind, was thought itself; body and soul and mind in her ran into one, like the thing a song means and the way it is said and the tune that it is sung to; like the last note of a cadence the least of the curls of sunned hair on her neck could thrill his sense with the splendor of all of her. Looking at one, he

asked, without caring to know, "Had they owned the land, those two, and sold the poor wretches to Newman?"

"If that were all! No. There have always been Newmans out at Cusheen, and rainy years, and blights on the potatoes. They're nothing. Oh, what a brute I am!" and her eyes, that had flung his suggestion off, lit on him like a touch on the arm from a self-humbling friend, "and you going there to help them against all these plagues—of course they do matter; why, they're the only ones my mother and I ever helped them with, either. We owed it them; they gave up freely a lot of things—things they could live on—things that had come from those—oh, can't you see?" She seemed to cry out upon some slowness of wit in him that would not abridge these pangs of revelation.

He made haste to say, "Yes, the Judas—some Judas, with silver," not really guessing at all, nor caring, except to smooth out of her forehead three lines that had creased it strainedly, dragging the skin. As to this mighty secret, why, the truth about other people's family secrets was surely the dulllest of all mice born to mountains. But she was auriferous soil, the true gold under dust; plaintive or cross about trifles, royally genial when tried, her face, that would scowl and flinch at the squeak of a chair on the floor, had cleared like a sky when she had spied danger. Full face she was a right Hebe, with that benign roundness of outline, the curve of the chin sweeping round, soft and full, from ear to ear. But as soon as she half turned to profile, the Hebe was gone, with her mere

fruit-like plumpness; now, from the point of the chin there sprang up to the further ear a curve noble and strong as that line of sustinent, continent grace, the outward stoop and lift of a vase or a sailing-ship's bow or a column's capital. Rounding the chin it drew in to a slight concave in passing the tip of the mouth, and then, as if collecting its strength, it filled and reached puissantly out and did not draw back till it held the modeled mass of the brow resting supreme on its glorious bracket; glorious always, awesomely queenly at times, as when she had said, "Can't you see?" and had seemed to retreat into twilight thickets of family chagrin, or of hurt faith, or of daughterly loyalty. All twilit woods are enchanted if you peer in from without. This one held menaces, even, in some of the dim vistas, down which the girl receded at times, beyond grasp or sight, a dryad whose oaks might be everything to her, and no man anything. But now she was clement again.

They talked plans—how he might have to go to Brabburn, to see this editor-body of Guy's; Guy would write to that worthy; they both felt sure—so airy is youth—that he must be a worthy, with all that the word implies of bleared sight and numbed tentacles. Were it so, Browne would still come back to London before he went to Ireland—should the good man in the North indeed desire him to. Then Browne must certainly come to Up-Felday to stay for a night at least. Her father and Guy, she said, insisted. June was wholly the hostess now; she was affable with a will. She acted as if for a wager, or rather by way of

argument with herself. If she were really shaken by something in this man, could she press hospitality on him as frankly as on any common "person worth knowing"? No, clearly. And so she would prove she was whole.

CHAPTER IX

"She is not fair to outward view
As many cities be."

BRABBURN is not a pretty city; nor is it Arcady around her. When steam was first used to turn wheels, a rash of towns broke out on the county's clear moorland skin. The rash is almost confluent now; all that is left of "country" for ten miles round Brabburn is patches of sooty grass going bald mangily, spots here and spots there, some scraggy and worried remains of thorn hedges, their failing powers of disjunction eked out with barbed wire, and some wide puddles in which, no doubt, cows of pastoral idyll, knee-deep among water-lilies, mused on the hot days of a century ago; now they are silted up with Swiss milk tins, old pans, and barrel-hoops sticking half out. At night all the main aggregations of urban light are tied to one another by unbroken strings of lamps, and up and down these slanting lines of beaded light the electric tramcars flit, rather like shooting stars, visiting those larger constellations.

By day some parts of the earth are seen to have been disemboweled in mining for coal, and part of the entrails left to lie on the body's outside in a mess that has caked hard and blackish; the rain that ran down the sides of these heaps, as Browne neared Brabburn, made gullies or furrows of paler dirt-color, much as

sweat does on the face of a sweep. For the last four miles the train ran level over low roofs, a mean sea of ridged ripples of slate. Peering down into the troughs between these he could spy now and then, when the wind tore a hole in their lids of damp smoke, a girl with a shawl on her head, or some whirled rag of a child, jug in hand, holding back hard while the storm blew her clothes before her over a shining wet pavement. Clothes-lines, now empty and whipping the air, crossed most of these streets, proclaiming that in unconquerable minds cleanliness held desperately out against the whole investing league of sodden air, sunlessness and hanging reek. "Many the wondrous things, but the most wondrous is man." Browne, compassionate but not depressed, hummed the old descant of happy surprise that is fresh as often as spring, and young again whenever any one who has read it feels the stir of his own youth.

At the train's last stop, two miles before Brabburn, the door flew instantly open, and through this sluice there surged into the carriage, with jubilant howls of "Play up, Brabburn!" and "Good old City!" a spate of pasty adolescence. They seemed to move not by separate personal impulse; rather, to be molecular units of tumbled froth in some turbid irruption of a liquid seeking lower levels. All wore the same football favor; their caps were cocked alike; they all smoked cigarettes, and did it with the same technique; when the first ecstasy of capture was spent, each seemed to let fall a slackened, but not weakly-made, lower lip till there spilt over its edge, like a child's

wilfully unmastered saliva, a dribble of gross, but not lascivious expletion, decking the tale of how Brabburn City ought to have won, and how gracelessly Bowton had beaten them, how venal the referee's judgments ("Talk about whistlin'!" "Bloody tram-driver!") had proved him, how tragically Brabburn's paladin, Hitch, had been out of form.

"'Itch," one of them suddenly turned to Aubrey, "'e's one o' them fast lads, an' last week 'e bashed 'is girl an' got a week an' only come out at eight this mornin'. The seven nights on the boards done 'im no good." He spoke as if Browne and he had been long acquainted. And then Browne saw a thing he had missed—that none of these youths knew the rest five minutes ago, any more than he did. He had not heard in the South this unhampered talk, with its instant assumptions of some universal interests in life, and also of every one's fitness to be accosted at sight as at least a probationary comrade.

Censure passed on from Bowton's players to Bowton's friends in the crowd. "Rough devils, they Bowton fellies!" said one critic, looking down as from Versailles on an impolite world.

"'Ear 'em taak, too!" said another. "Gawd amighty, it's bleedin' awful."

A chorus of "Ah's" assented. Somebody went one better. "Taak abaht Bowton!" he said. "Owdham's place fer roughyeds. I see last train out, fer Owdham way, Saturday neet. One chap come to bookin'-office window. 'Gie's a ticket,' 'e says. 'Wheer fer?' says clerk. 'Whoam,' says 'e.

'Wheer's 'ome?' says clerk. 'What th' 'ell's that to thee?' says t' roughyed. 'Righto!' says clerk, 'ere's tha ticket. I can see thee's fra Owdham.' "

All laughed, saluting a truth. Browne was enchanted; the prospect was widening; new social landscape, plane behind plane of unaffected manners, opened out into the far distance. "Owdham's aal reet," another went on, "but was th' ever at Blackston? They don't mak' folk at aal—not to caal whole folk—at Blackston. Nobbut offal an' boilin' pieces."

The talk passed to whippets, wild-fowling, flower-shows, contests between brass bands. Browne saw another thing then; under their uniform of manner and outward habit they could be furiously diverse. Every one swore, contradicted, was bursting to back some preference of his own. And then again they would come together, naïvely, in some sudden unison of gusto. A youth took out of the crown of his hat a single bloom of some uncommon lily; he handed it round. The connoisseurs wagged silent heads. "There's a lot of work in them petals," the owner claimed, and the others said "Ah!" allowing to Nature's fret-saw the precious forced praise of experts, not courtiers. Then, in the harshest, unsentimental way, as if he were cursing a sudden twinge of pain in his stomach, another youth interjected:—"Eh, but a' wish March throstles 'ud start whistlin'!" and, once more, all said assentively, "Ah!"

Browne shivered with pleasure. Northern England was opening before him—the mills amid heather; the soot on peat-moss and bracken; the droves of "hands"

herded to work and back with whistle and hooter; rocks of the prime sticking out in streets of slums at the foot of high fells, where the townspeople seem at first like so many house-sparrows twittering samely from urban eaves, but break now and then into speech that thrills like the unexpected call of a grouse; the sane earthen humor and harsh pith of mind: the sociable rudeness.

Brabburn; the train stopped; here, too, were delicious differences. The cabs were of the dark ages. Browne's hansom, by two modes of jolting, reported by turns two kinds of stone setts, the one small, rough, iron-hard, the other large, softer, and worn into holes that must be like small fonts; like fonts, too, these cavities seemed to have been treasured. Yet this was a city of wealth, spirit, great history, sometimes of national leadership. Clearly it had its own notions of what was worth having. Good place! Browne was prepared to be kind to it. After all, why should not some good come out of the provinces? Browne, alone with his glee in the lightless cab, made an exultant grimace. His thoughts ran ahead; they probed for other surprises that might come. He was going now to visit the *Northerner's* editor, Mullivant. Mullivant might be uncommon? Not very likely, though. An editor—that meant banality. No, it was hopeless. Aubrey had never seen the *Northerner*, but he perceived that it was hopeless. Still, a provincial editor might have a house good to wake up in; a lawn to look out on, red with the night's fall of beech leaves,

perhaps; a long view, possibly, up to dim Pennine Hills.

Revolving these things he was dropped on a grudging ledge of footpath under a cliff of bald brick. Was the cabman sure? They had not left the station three minutes. Yes, that there was Middleton House, the driver said, with a temperate note of contempt. White faces, nighed in dark shawls, flitted in and out at the door, each of their owners adding an infinitesimal increment of polish to the varnished dirt-stain at elbow level on the yellow brick. One of them passed to the cabman, now paid and swinging up to his box, an audible jibe at the new castaway on such rocks as a Brabburn tenement block. The cabman's wit reacted with ribald fertility; Browne enjoyed it while climbing the three pair of stairs, half in and half out of the building, to Mullivant's rooms. No, Mr. Mullivant wasn't in yet, said a middle-aged slattern, who lived in the tenement next his and said that she "did" for him; she had come with the key when Browne knocked. She let him in, first making sure that he was licensed to come, lighted the lamp, introduced him with a gesture to the general contents of the interior and left him.

Browne looked round, charmed. Life never failed; its surprises bettered your hopes of its infinite vivacity. The room was big and was all book-lined, except where Samuel Palmer's tiny etching of Milton's lark rising at dawn looked fair as the one star in a sky. A terrier, curled up on the hearth like a whiting cooked, glanced up out of sleep, whined out a loud yawn and

re-imbedded its head in its tail, disgusted that this was not Mullivant. There were two tables and three chairs. What else the room held looked as if it were there because it had not been noticed. In a brown Delft jar in one corner a parched sheaf of bulrushes rustled dry in the draughts that soughed under the door and puffed up the carpet in traveling patches of convexity as they traversed the floor.

Browne snuffed up the scent of a mind that took its own way absorbedly. There were books of price—the Second Folio, Keats in first editions, the *Vicar of Wakefield* the same, a Baskerville Virgil—and there was that one heaven's window of a print, monogamously loved, and there was the shocking carpet undulating unimpeded; a wet gust whipped the panes, the curtains bellied, the terrier rose as if levered up by the blast, revolved twice on his basic area, still in the shape of a couchant capital C, and again, on a lull, collapsed into unquiet sleep; the bulrushes huddled and shuddered with small, sere crepitations. Mullivant must have put them there five or ten years ago. Oh, happy absence of mind! Strung up to his pitch of to-day, Browne could see what success in life meant—to be taken up, blood, brain and heart, the whole man, into some passion as strong as lust, only good, that will use you up in a tranced unawareness of anything else as being worth while.

Soon Mullivant came, not as people come into rooms now, but as they did in the first tale of adventure that your father told you, your thrilled expectancy robing them. He was forty-three; he was six feet tall;

though lean, he weighed thirteen stone; his head thrust and peered a little, as if his sight were shortening. The body's air of decayed magnificence was confirmed by its clothes, which were of fine stuff, finely cut in a fashion dead for several years; coat and collar proclaimed the date of their owner's last note of what other men wore. His face at first nearly appalled; the beetling of his forehead merged on menace; the quite black eyes questioned you grimly, keeping you off meanwhile as with pitchforks; and a strong, ugly nose—the one ugly feature—and mighty chin contributed liberally to the sum of awesomeness. Then, of a sudden, all the awesomeness broke down. Some comic vision, evoked by a phrase in their greetings, tickled this dragon; his head flung back with a roar of laughter like an enormous boy's; the whole redoubtable enigma of the face was solved into large, genial elements—huge good-will; huge simplicity; some shyness, not egoistic, but humble; eager respect, like a child's, for the unpacked contents of the next moment or of a new friend.

They supped at a space cleared of books, talking, of course, about Oxford at first, as both had been there; and, as Browne had been there but the other day, he talked about the men of genius in the place, his good friends, the sinewy minds of junior dons and the broad wings of the last moment's poets. Mullivant listened and liked it: these ardors—so his look said—ought to go on; and Browne saw, in Mullivant's mirroring eye and sneerless laugh, the young Theban eagles fall on their feet, perhaps in the Treasury, and

no harm done, or build their eyries, like temple-haunting martlets, amid the Virginia creepers of rectories. The meat, cooked by the slattern you heard of, was not distinguishably mutton or beef, but just cooked meat, something generic, that might have been the unflavored basis of all the kindly individual meats of the earth. But both the eaters had harvesters' vitals, and there was good wine, dating back like Mullivant's coat, and talk flowed with it.

"You've written before?" Mullivant asked when they had made friends and slowly fetched round to business, with both pipes alight.

Browne's face must have grown a little expressive at this. Had his firstling, his novel, not penetrated these wilds?

"Oh, your yarn?" Mullivant laughed—a kind and shy minor laugh that he had; it said and did many things for him—met the shyness or fumbling of other people halfway and comprehended all sorts of things and made all kinds of allowances. "Yes; most jolly. I liked your cheek in spinning it out of high spirits, like that, without any observation behind 'em. All right for once, you know; only—" Again the small laugh let the point in unwoundingly. "Do write another, some day, about real people. But what I was meaning was stuff in our line."

Hurriedly Browne digested the note on his masterpiece. Yes, that was what he had tried to keep from himself when people had praised it for what it was not—that it was really no novel at all; he had just let fly, in the joy of his youth, and bluffed them. Praise

tasted good, and yet it was better to have this fellow-workman's undeceived eye seeing how little one came to, so far.

"Articles, essays, you know?" Mullivant asked. "You've brought something? Good. Read—do you mind? I'll not look at you."

What Browne now read out he had written in London last night. Mullivant's invitation had asked for "specimens" of his handiwork. Browne, surveying his own past magnoperations, and musing on what these newspapers were, had found in his desk nothing so unclean and common that it could be trusted to tell with an editor. Stooping to conquer, he took a trite theme of the day, and, half ashamed and half gleeful, penned on the spot some sagacious remarks not too searching, he hoped, for "the general reader's" wits, nor too nicely minted for that oaf's sense of form. The stuff was certainly not quite, quite—so he felt while he blotted the last page; still, some kinds of jeweler's work could only be done in alloys: with an inward sigh he owned it.

He now recited this goodly creation, sitting, to do it, in the full light of the shaded lamp. Mullivant, sunk in an arm-chair, in shadow, his face to the fire, was perfectly still for the first few minutes. He then shifted uneasily, like the terrier in the draught. Then he quiesced again, for a shorter time, but his next movement verged on convulsion, the springs of his chair squeaking abruptly, as if all the thirteen stone had fallen back on them together, after writhing or bounding up two or three inches in uncontrollable

agony. Browne read on, but wished he were out of the lamplight. Once, at a paragraph's end, he saw the firelit silhouette of Mullivant's face staring at a fixed point high on the wall as though he had toothache and wanted to mesmerize himself into apathy. Again, at some phrase in which Browne hoped he had caught the tone of the trade, the audience let out a grunt of disrelish, not loud but deep. Browne shirked nothing of what he had brought on himself. It was much. He felt that a whole world was gaping at him, posed there in limelight to show off his emptiness.

At last silence fell; it lasted some moments, with Mullivant still collapsed in his chair, the leaping light of tiny flames dappling his crag of a face, and Browne drawn back from the lamp, for darkness to cover him. Speech had to come, soon or late. It came late. As Mullivant's face turned at length, a coal fell in and threw up a bigger flame, and Browne could see, with poignant gratitude, the extraordinary ruthfulness of his eyes. He began, "My dear boy," with a kind of wrathful affection, as if a visitation endured together had ripened friendship swiftly, "don't let me ever see you do that again."

The patient muttered contritely; he "feared he had not got the tone"—he "had read newspapers too little."

Mullivant groaned. "Too little! Within one half-hour you've said that something or other advanced by leaps and bounds, and something else should be more honored in the breach than the observance, that some one was out of touch with the age and somebody not in

contact with vital realities. A's taste was ' execrable,' and B's satire ' scathing,' and C's public virtue a ' vanishing point,' and D's judgment ' conspicuous by its absence.' And *you* think you don't read the papers!" He worked himself up to a frenzy of tender brutality, pulling and throwing about the misfitting vesture of ready-made words in which Browne had dressed himself, thinking, poor wretch, to have the right uniform. Mullivant first stripped away the re-dyed old feathers of speech, the " mute, inglorious Miltons," the " Frankenstein's monsters," the " Pyrrhic victories," the " Sisyphean labors," the " Homeric laughter." " What d'you want with calico flowers from dust-holes?" he cried, as he stamped on them. " ' French *esprit*,' too, good Lord! and ' German thoroughness,' and ' Parthian darts,' and ' Chinese stagnation.' Why, it's an international exhibition of used fireworks." Then he ripped up the seams, or what should have been seams, the pastings and tackings together with sham-naïve " ands " and " fors," and " as regards " and " in relation to "; and, this done, he visited the fundamental imbecilities of structure, the way that clause knocked down clause and page unsaid page and the whole came to nothing.

Browne felt naked, and yet, strangely, he did not mind now. There was a saving kindness, almost a praise, in the very way the stripping was done. It seemed to imply that he was able to afford it; that clothes were not the whole of him; that, these gone, there would be something left which could see what rubbish was and eschew it. In the half-light that is

good for confidences each could see that the other was sorry and friendly, the battered trash uniting him who had made to him who had rent it.

"Of course, if you want to be liked," said Mullivant, tranquilly now, "you should write like that, just. People love it. It's merely a fad not to give it 'em. Sport, though—to make 'em read just what they hate."

"'How if 'a will not stand'?" Browne delightedly quoted.

"Make him. Use your wit till people will take it from you that they're fools almost as well as they take it from lickspittles that they're all Solons. They'll want lies and then you must sharpen and sharpen precision till it will tickle like irony. Or they'll want whooping and brag, and then you must still down your quietness till, with the blether that's going on all round, it tells like an epigram." Mullivant pulled up, somewhat abashed; was he giving a lecture?

"They do stand it?" Browne asked, wondering.

Mullivant made a grimace. "Of course, trash must pay best, for a while yet—the whole of our time, no doubt. And of course we have owners to feed, and wolves to repel from several large, green doors in Mayfair."

"I know." Browne had seen Guy gracefully browsing on three-sixteenths of what was left over after the current expenses of Mullivant's honor had been subtracted from current profits on Mullivant's wits.

That was all right, for Mullivant. He was well enough pleased that his fellow-owners—his own share

was a single sixteenth—should eat up their twenty thousand pounds a year in peace, a good long way off, and leave him and a friend to their whim of keeping the paper decent. His life in a slum was quite cheap, as well as delightful. But finance was not to be talked about with this boy. Their talk ran again on the sport of palming coherence and continence off on customers who had come out to buy rant or slops—"ringing a pig's nose, all over again, every morning, to drag him along, and making him pay a penny a day for the ring," Mullivant called it, but could not disguise his love of the pig—"a most dear beast he is, really—bound to turn out a god if we don't bedevil him now."

Then Mullivant really let himself go; his talk, as he warmed, gained a headlong brilliancy; gleaming and turbid, it tumbled along in flood, with audacious ellipses, leaps from point to point, rapid assumptions that this or that need not be labored, that comprehension was waiting, ready, in Browne's mind, needing only a hail. And—good miracle of mental comradeship—waiting it was; the taxed wits in Browne girt themselves up to keep pace, and did it; they rose to it, even rose off the known ground and looked around over new, exciting expanses with eyes that found they could transcend old view-limiting hills. The firelight flickered lower and mellower, quickening the adventurous spirit. Browne's made long voyages. Once, at a pause, he noticed the storm was over outside. He looked at the clock. Three hours had passed, as though in climbing a mountain. He said so.

"You care about mountains? Come for a walk in the Pennine to-morrow," said Mullivant.

"Rather."

"Bruntwood is coming," Mullivant said as he lit his guest bedward. "You ought to know Bruntwood."

"Your business manager, didn't you say?"

"Yes, it's he runs the paper, really."

CHAPTER X

“A mind
That nobleness made simple as a fire.”

W. B. YEATS.

IN the dead waste and middle of the night some madman in wooden shoes came stamping along the street and knocked furiously at every door. So it seemed to Browne at his own violent awakening. Ten minutes' silence ensued. Nobody seemed to resent the outrage. Then two more wooden shoes could be heard shuffling out of a house and pegging away down the street; others issued at lessening intervals until the darkness, now blenching, dinned with the hammering, tapping and slithering of wood on stone; the dots of sound, running together, became a line and a thick one. Then a turn came; the din slackened, the dots were separable again. And then, when all seemed to be subsiding there burst forth the strangest jangle of cacophonies, a monstrous jostle of steam-blown whistles, hooters, drones, sirens, buzzers, some a few hundreds yards off, others a mile or two, all of them shrilling, howling, or desperately holding out one note, as if armadas of sinking ships were bellowing for help in a fog.

Browne, sleepy and rueful, still had to laugh. It seemed like some vast and primitive jest, a gigantic skit on Oxford's bird-like clangor of morning bells.

Then, still and small through the uproar, a clock struck, and one by one the dissonant choristers threw up their parts, some with the unashamed bathos of a note of deflation, some with a strident last snort flung out ferociously on the aching air; one, that had not struck in till the prime of discord was past, completed its truculent cadence as a solo. Two or three last pairs of clogs were heard fleeing down the street, as from some pursuant wrath, and, next thing that he knew, Browne was once more being awakened, this time by Mullivant's rap on his door.

Day was come, blank and chill. Behind the squat houses, and ten times as high, there bulked rectangular frameworks looking like travesties of festal palaces, all window, with every pane ablaze in each long tier of their eight or nine piled stories. Breakfast done the two walked to the station; Bruntwood would meet them there. As they walked Mullivant solved for Aubrey the riddle set him at dawn, explained the "knocker-up's" trade and the separate voice with which each mill or yard gave its own army the word to fall in.

"Another marvel of ours—here!" Over the side of a bridge Mullivant showed a little river running thirty feet lower, between house walls, and still breaking over the rock of its bed as it had done when a trout-stream. But it was opaque and stank, and it was light blue. Aubrey stared.

"Orange to-morrow, perhaps," said Mullivant. "Yesterday, mauve. It's too often mauve. Poor color, mauve."

"Does nobody murmur?" Browne asked.

"At all the mauve?"

"And the stink?"

"The old grumbler, the *Northerner*, does. It's illegal, of course. But half the bench pollute rivers themselves. So when a friend poisons all the fish in a stream, or kills a few children with typhoid, they fine him a shilling and sneer at the prosecutor. Bruntwood noticed the game and gave me no rest till we set on the rogues."

"Successfully?"

Mullivant waved a hand towards the azure filth. "Si monimentum quaeris"—he laughed. "Still, it had some effect. It got Bruntwood blackballed at Rose's, a club here."

That loitering almost lost them the train. It was crowded. Brabburn Races had ended last night and bookmakers, tipsters, three-card men and more direct thieves were homing to London and Birmingham. Browne and Mullivant parted, each to jump in where he could; they would rejoin at Howden, the moorland station for which they were bound; no doubt they would meet Bruntwood there.

Browne found he had plumped into the thick of a debate. His entry reduced its heat for one moment, like a spoon plunged into boiling water; the last comer into a full compartment seems to be, by some law of our nature, an alien and suspect, until by lapse of time and the silent operations of the soul he becomes insensibly a brother-in-arms against any yet later entrant. But any warmth lost was restored swiftly.

Those were the happy first weeks of the Boer War, so long desired, so ardently wooed; the spirited part of the press was firing our hearts with daily assurances, dear to the non-combatant heart, that the fight was between heroes and ogres, and that the ogres had ugly, flat-footed wives and ill-kept infants. Browne soon perceived that four or five pillars of sport from London, and two or three Northern workmen, had just been fused into one substance by some effective story of Boer barbarity. At first the only insoluble object that could be seen was a little weasel-like man with feet dangling well clear of the floor, a hard-bitten stickler to proof, with the wizened calm and husbanded asperity found in some disputants long inured to man's usage of strictly logical persons.

A clearly unfinished rebuke to this slave of reason was now resumed by a London "bookie," a big, red, personable varlet, over-dressed, vast-necked and triple-chinned, with a belly that he swaggered like a medal, and bibulous eyes, from which the aqueous part of his liquor seemed to lip uncontainably over the lower lids. "Strikes *me*," he said, "yer little better'n a trytor."

"Do it?" said the weasel. "Well, it ain't the point."

"Oh, yn't it?" sneered the other.

"Point is," the drastic thinker rejoined, "is it right? Jus' you keep to that. Is this war right? Now then!"

"'Ark at 'im!" the bookie appealed to men and gods. "'Is it rahyt?' 'e says. Is 'is ahn country rahyt?" Sympathetic horror was legible on several

faces. Inspired by so much backing the big man turned abruptly on the little one and asked him in mock-confidential tones, as if parched with genuine thirst for information—" 'Ere, mite, 'ow much a week d'yer git fer syin' that? "

" Eh, but that's it," put in a virtuous-looking workman, with conviction, raising his eyes from a paper in which the upper half of the open page seemed to be one tall stack of printed outcries.

" An' 'oo pyes 'im? " the bookmaker's clerk supported his principal.

The little man clearly felt lonely. Still, all he would yield to unreason was to fall back on a general aspiration which fools might mistake, if they chose, for something other than a crusher to themselves. " Well, God defend the right," he said; " that's all I say."

The bookie almost shrieked, " Didn' I sye 'e was a trytor? Garn! Prow-Bower! "

It was clear to public opinion, thus capably led, that the little man had established the fact of his villainy. " Wants 'is 'ead knocked orf," said a third sporting expert, in a heavy fur coat and fantastically discolored linen, speaking apparently in soliloquy.

" Arskin' fer it! " said a fourth.

" Ow, choke 'im, fer Chrahyst's sike! " said a fifth.

It looked as if there might be a mobbing. The little man sat next but one to a window. Between it and him sat a man in a Norfolk jacket. He was as tall and as broad as the big bookie, but not at all so deep below the waist; his face had an expression of slowly-traveling but surely arriving good-sense which made

Browne, now that he noticed its wearer, think of the Suffolk Punch breed of cart-horse and want to stroke him gently on his roughly-tweedled shoulder and say, "Good horse, Dobbin," feeling sure that to kick or bite was not in him. For some time he had been detaching himself by degrees from the study of a large-scale map open on his knees and taking in the drift of the debate; and now, just when it promised to become physical, he touched the menaced minority man on the arm, heaved a gradual head towards the window, and said, in a tone at once phlegmatic and casual, "Mind changing places with me? Bit of a draught."

The small man had complied before he knew whether he was doing a good turn or getting one. And somehow the change seemed to quench all hope of a scuffle. It put the little man strangely far out of reach. Beyond those puissant tweed thighs he was lodged as if at the inner extremity of a cave.

The good cause had undergone a setback. While the intervener re-immersed himself in his map the patriot chief discreetly ascended from the particular to the general. "Pineful," he said to the congregation at large, "that's wot I call it—the wye forr'n gaowld degrides a 'uman bein'. Pineful. Sime level as vermin it degrides 'im. Nah, too, when our brive lads are ficin'—well, yesterday I'd a said ficin' a few stinkin' Bowers, but to-dye I sye ficin' a fow contemp'ible in pint of stren'th an' currij', but a fow as refrines from naow outrige on yoomanity—killin' the wounded, refusin' all quarter, abusin' the wahyt flag. Wahy, it's within mahy pers'n'l knowledge that the monsters in

femile shipe they call their women 'abitch'ly turn aht, after battle, lahyk, just to mut'lite ahr dead, sime as Afghan squaws do."

The man in the Norfolk put down a finger to keep a place on his map, looked leisurely up and said in a friendly tone, "Oh, that's not true, you know," as if the other had dropped a pipe or a glove and would like to be told.

The orator gaped. His eyes bewilderedly sized up the culprit, his weight, height, probable reach, and also his clothes; and the cringing instinct of class told the bookie that he must make himself much more drunk with words before he could effectively affront a social better. So he spoke almost calmly: "Ahr frien', I see, is not a reader of ahr pytriotic press. More at 'ome, mye-be, with all them forr'n gutter rags 'at dily charges our gallan' army with crahymys so 'orrible as aownly exists in the diseased imaginytion of 'im that says it."

"Killing the wounded, refusing all quarter, abusing the white flag?" Printed, it looks like a *tu quoque*; as uttered by him of the tweeds it was like one builder's friendly hint to another that he is forgetting a brick.

But the angel of wrath was now winging on too grandly to fold his wings yet. "Ahr frien' does credit to 'is teachers. I 'ope they knaow 'ah well 'e's doin'. But wot are we to sye, my frien's, of one 'oo mikes the en'my's cause 'is aown?"

"Wring 'is bleedin' neck," squealed a stunted phthisical youth in the corner remotest from the pro-

posed beneficiary by the suggestion, whose eyes now settled on the youth, with an exploratory and conjectural expression wholly benevolent, while the more gifted speaker, concerned for his climax, held up a hand.

"Wite, I sye. Wite. Wot are we to sye of one 'oo comes 'ere in ahr midst, 'oldin' a brief for the murd'ers of 'is countrymen? Wot—?"

The sitter for this portrait, having framed by now a conception of the bloody-minded consumptive, turned to attend to the main stream of commination. In the same helpful voice, as though he were wishing his censors were making a better job of it, he asked, "What was it I said, now? Try back, my dear sir."

But the bookie was soaring beyond human aid. "Naow, my frien', naow! Naow use shufflin'. I sye, wot maowtive can any man 'ave—wot maowtive bar one—fer shieldin' the murd'ers of ahr brothers an' sons—yours and mahyn, fellah-countrymen?" His gestures expanded; he spoke to a nation.

"Ah?" The man in the Norfolk was more animated. "You have a son at the war?"

"Ah—if *you* aownly 'ad!" mocked the Cockney. He gave a forensic sigh.

"I have two," said the other, without any sense of value in the words as repartee. "One in Ladysmith. Yours, sir—where?"

The bookie fled off into figures of speech. "Yn't we all sons of ahr country? Yn't we all brothers? Yn't—?" He was graveled for a moment.

The other went on from his own thought. "It

makes one wish one were surer that this war is just." He looked round, as if to put a private experience into the pool were the normal way of human intercourse. Browne's eyes met his and offered, perhaps, a kind of support, but the offer was not embraced; the other, it seemed, would as soon stand alone—or at least not make one in a "set," a tacit league of the civilized, against poor brutes.

The rhetorician was fumbling back along the track of his own eloquence for a good place to start from afresh. "Did I sye 'murd'ers'? 'Ounds, I *should* sye—'ounds, savidges, 'oose dev'lish caowd degrades 'em b'laow all civ'lized bein's. An' sneaks, to that. Curs, sime as 'ounds are."

The Norfolked man said in his slow way, "I can't feel sure they were two thousand curs who beat those five thousand of our men last week." Browne could see that the man had no irony, no humor; he merely imparted a difficulty; he only wanted to know.

But at the words Browne could feel, too, that a shudder traversed the company's soul. These non-combatants had need that the enemy they were not fighting should have every baseness. It was a faith and, like many faiths, it flinched away from the fingers of sincerity; it bleated or stormed to be spared any glimpse of what might have to be faced if its own creed were true. Why raise such questions at all? What could this man want, hanging about the safe? If he was honest, why did he not go away? One little thimble-rigger, wrung to the vitals, gasped out, "'E's pide for it."

"That's abaht it," groaned somebody else.

"'Ow much a week for the two?" squeaked the undersized youth, embracing in one basilisk glance the massive heretic and his own brother atomy ensconced behind that infidel bulk.

And yet Browne felt indescribably, inexplicably sure that in some uncorrupted layer of a few of their minds there was germinating in the dark a dismaying admission that this beast was braver than they, though a beast, and clean, as salt water is clean, though nauseous. Those who had not the means in themselves to find this in his face imagined other dread possibilities there. His eyes, unapprehensive, seeking, appraising perhaps, roamed slowly over the patriots' persons; could he be weighing their relative rights to be thrown through the window? "Ah, my frien's," the orator again subsided into generalities, "if you noo all the things I knaow abaht wot Bower gaowld is doin'—"

"In England? You think many Englishmen take it?" The heathen's voice expressed an unexhausted assurance that there must be something in what people said, if you could get at it.

The bookie shrugged. He threw himself upon public opinion.

"Bribes?" The other had rummaged out slowly the unready word.

"I'm not argyin'. I'm simply tellin' yer." The bookie looked anxious.

The other's eyes widened with interest. "You *can* tell us? Cases you know of?"

"I tell yer I'm not argyin'," the bookie spluttered.

Who is not flustered to find his chaff inopportunately taken for grain? A damp fell round these ardent souls so chillily that at the next station the parched little devotee of reason got out in peace.

When they started again the engine labored; the train was ascending a long mountain valley; the line contoured high on one flank, with a chain of dammed lakes below in the bed of the dale, in the Northern way; every fit glen, up there, must become a town's cistern.

Public opinion was not silenced yet, only disquieted. The bookie fell back from the firing line of debate, but the virtuous British workman, good soul, lowered his vociferous newspaper, challenged the troubler with a look of "Frankly, come now, man to man," and said, "After all, I s'pose you'd allow it *would* be right your country's enemies should fight fair, like?"

Browne could see the thoughts muster, in answer, like slow, intent children, before the words came. "I'd go even further, I think. I'd say every one ought to." As it was uttered it was not a snub, nor a cutting retort, nor an uncutting platitude; rather, it was like the rediscovery of a lost region, humbly communicated by a diffident finder. So Browne thought, but the rest were only the more disturbed. They gave it up; their inward peace was menaced; where would it end if we all were to look at things in that way, with that disloyalty to accepted tacit precautions for taking the sting out of truth? And yet, deuce take the man, somehow he mattered. Browne read that much in their silence.

The quick grunts of the mounting engine stopped, almost at a platform. Howden it was. Browne jumped out at once and saw Mullivant coming to meet him. No; to meet somebody else, seen over Browne's shoulder. "Morning, Bruntwood," Mullivant said, with a look of content.

Browne looked round. "Morning," the man in the Norfolk jacket was answering, with a quiet, long-lasting smile of equally deep contentment.

"You didn't guess?" Mullivant asked of Browne.

"No. I knew Pistol at once, and Bardolph and one or two others, but—"

"But not Sir Bors?" laughed Mullivant.

Bruntwood's look said, "What's this recondite allusion?" His looks often did.

Mullivant beamed on the other's perplexity. "Only a buffer in Tennyson,* rather like you."

*Possibly Mullivant thought of the lines in the "Holy Grail," a poem still much read at that time :

"Sir Bors it was

Who spake so low and sadly at our board;
And mighty reverent at our grace was he;
A square-set man and honest; and his eyes,
An out-door sign of all the warmth within,
Smiled with his lips."

CHAPTER XI

“This other Eden, demi-paradise,

. . . . this little world,

.

This blessed plot.”

King Richard II., Act ii. Scene 1.

AT the station they left the main valley and walked for two hours up a tributary defile. It narrowed and blackened till both its sides were steep slants of dark shale, with the solid rock cropping out from it in low vertical tiers of crag, each with its own refuse-shoot of broken stone streaming away from its foot. The sides converged at last to form a rough gully of scree. Up it the three walkers stumbled and puffed, to emerge above on the upper story of Northern England. Color and form conspired to give Browne a sense of soft undulation in this high moor. Purple and tan and chocolate, grave green and clear green and greenish gray, the unlevel carpet of mixed heather, bracken, bilberries, many grasses and emerald weed, rose and fell, mile beyond mile, the light and the dark in its pattern sometimes stressing and sometimes rendering less salient the modeling of the land, as the paint on an actor's face deepens a dimple or erases a line.

Bruntwood and Mullivant seemed to know what they were making for. Browne did not ask. There is a good taste of their own about places you come to

without knowing how; they have the disconnection of dreams from the cumbrance of all questions of access; it only englamours their memory more to feel that you could not by any means find your way back to them now. An hour's wading through heather and bilberries led them out on to a plateau a little higher still. It was springy ground, barer now, and peat-dark. The two leaders gazed intently over this bog, seemed to agree, and set off again towards a group of slight swellings upon its surface.

They walked thus for another half hour, communicative grunts between Bruntwood and Mullivant growing more frequent. Then these two stopped, cast about for some minutes like hounds that have all but got good scent, and finally came to a stand at a boss or tussock of peat, perhaps a yard square and rising, like thousands of similar tussocks round it, a couple of feet above the bed of the eroded trenches that reticulated the whole surface of the moss.

Mullivant stood on the boss. He kicked it, simulating casualness. "Top of England—this hummock," he said to Browne, with his little laugh a little embarrassed.

"Not, of course," Bruntwood said, word by word, "the very highest point."

Mullivant's face delighted in the literal man. "No," he said; "no disrespect to Scawfell. But the ridge of the roof. See!"

Browne's eyes followed the speaker's, and saw. From the flooded outer cells at one side of the soaked sponge under Mullivant's feet the brown bog-water

oozed out at his pressure and trickled a few inches down its outer wall, a drop at a time, till it neared the line of another broken drip from a few inches off. The two came together with the pause and sudden embrace of raindrops meeting on a pane, and hurried on. Three inches further another drop rushed to join them, and then another and another, till in the bed of the trench at the foot of the little peat wall there was enough water moving to break on a stone in its way with an infinitesimal splash, the first cry of an infant river.

"The Mersey!" Mullivant said, with his face kindling. The shyness of a child avowing a great find was being burnt up by a child's ungovernable jubilation. "Now come over here."

Browne stepped across the hummock and over the little ditch on its far side, and turned to look. Out of this wall of the hummock there welled slow drop after drop, each remoistening for a second a track down the wall to a tiny moat of wine-dark bilge at its foot, stagnant except at one end; there, when the air stirred the bilge, its ripples lipped over a chance dam formed in the peaty trash and fell a few inches into a lower reach of the trench. There was more water there; it had other feeders; at the far end it moved away visibly.

"If you might call the other the Mersey, then perhaps you might call this the Trent!" Bruntwood said this and then exploded in a big laugh at the violence of the verbal gambol that he had executed.

"Jump on the hummock," said Mullivant. "All

jump. Make a flood in the German Ocean and Irish Sea."

Bruntwood roared. If he ever understood a figure of speech it was as a tremendous practical joke, a big guiltless lie by which you naturally take care that no one shall be taken in. "Inundate Liverpool and Hull!" he said, in a tone to which notes of exclamation can do no justice, and roared again.

Mullivant visibly doated on Bruntwood when Bruntwood gave way like this to his temperament. "Now, all together!" Mullivant ordered, crowding the three of them on to the big peaten footstool. All three jumped as one man, till from each of its sides the dark juice gushed and spurted; the minute cisterns that caught it were all astir.

"Cease jumping!" said Mullivant, blowing. There was a moment's pause, half awkward, but only half. Browne was being initiated into something. He felt and liked it. Each of the two wise babies was taking him tacitly into the league that bound them, each other's opposites as they were, and sent them up into these moorland places to play at such games as tracing pairs of rivers and seas to their first rivalry as suitors for ooziings from the gorged tissues of one cubic foot of a bog. With a little glow of pride Browne felt he was fit to come in. He had drunk before of the cup of their drunkenness, upon the Dent Rouge, when Europe unrolled itself like a scroll. How things belonged to each other! How they closed in, all of them good, as if to some one great end or high happiness! What brought him here, to find elder brothers? What

sent him and that girl who was now a figure in every landscape of thought—what sent them up the mountain together and lit the fire in his blood? Chance? Accidents, then, could conspire, counsel and authorize. Everything grew to one point; he was waved towards it by hand after hand.

“Do you remember,” Bruntwood asked Mullivant, “that field near Naseby—the one where the Avon starts, close to the church, and the Nen just over the way?”

“And the Welland too, in the parson’s cellar,” said Mullivant, “three miles away. What a place to be buried in!”

“Naseby?” asked Aubrey.

Bruntwood explained. “Yes, the men, or at least some of the men, that were killed in the fight. They are in a big pit. The earth has sunk in a little.”

“England’s dead center, that place,” Mullivant said —“the tip top; she falls away from it all around.”

“There are brambles round the pit,” Bruntwood toiled on at his own internal picture.

Mullivant rushed on with his. “The Trent, and the Thames, and the Ouse, and the Stratford Avon all come up to your feet. And Edgehill in sight—a long ridge. Remember, Brunt, how it stuck up in the sunset?”

Bruntwood had finished his own small Naseby landscape within him at last. He emerged from absorption. “Yes, during the ‘orgy,’” he said, surrounding the last word with laughter as though with vast inverted commas.

Some other huge joke, thought Browne, and glancing at Mullivant, saw its mildness and age in Mullivant's look of affectionate mirth at the beloved dullness of his friend. "Bruntwood refers," he said, "to a bu'st we once had, of topography."

"Yes?" Browne importuned.

"We walked all along England's spine. We began at the Border and came South, keeping right up on the main watershed, so that we never crossed a river. That was the game. They all fell away, right and left, before us. Down as far as the Peak we could go pretty straight. Then we had to fetch a big bend to the right—the west, you know—so as not to wet our feet in the head of the Trent; then back to the left—the east—to Naseby, to dodge round all the tips of the Avon; and then west again, for a deuce of a way, to keep up from the Thames, and so on. That was the orgy."

"Well, I'm blowed," said Browne, cordially.

Mullivant warmed. "So were we. I found I had never seen England till then. Bits of her I'd seen, of course, but not her—the whole figure. We looked down from the top into every Jack one of the water-tight hollows she's made of, and saw what it was like, and the river in each one like a big leafless tree—trunk and branches and twigs; when you touched a twig all the tree came into sight, right down to the sails of barges out on the Humber. Just look." He pointed where, far out to their left, there ran, broken and dim, a bar of high ground, a rib of England's skeleton, trek-

king crookedly away across lowland Yorkshire's broad stretch of green. Browne saw.

"‘Little England!’ cried Mullivant. ‘People sneer at it! Thank all your gods it’s so small. Only just small enough to be seen; still, it’s possible. Beg pardon, though; you’re an Irishman.’"

"Is it lovers of different mistresses that would be jealous?" said Browne; not that he had, as yet, a love like this for any place. But he knew love when he saw it; here was the real thing, in Mullivant's face and voice—the ecstasy over visible traits of love's object, the craving of sense to take it all in, round and whole as a jewel, small and embraceable, apt to lovers' diminutives.

Two Cordelias abetting each other to doat on one wayward parent could scarcely have talked sentiment less than Mullivant and Bruntwood did for the rest of that day. Still, they would let out a reference now and again to some old walk or ride; one or other would look up a name here and there in the joint mental index that they kept of their funded visions; and Browne, now on the watch, would catch glimpses of Evesham orchards as they are when the enamored eye sees them dropping apples to float in Shakespeare's slow Avon; of Tudor houses knee-deep in the mists of winter sunsets; and then, again, of the roaring Strand with the air a dust of gold on fine afternoons; or of the wind planing the South coast into shape with the rub, rub of shingle pressed, always the one way, by the Atlantic's hand; or the make of this great triple-layered Pennine arch, astride of North England—how

the crown of the arch was worn off till the edges of all its coating layers showed raw—red rock and coal and dark rock. Browne could shut his eyes and see the layered floor crumple itself into hills.

Once, as they sat smoking after their sandwiches, something political made its way into the talk. Then the shocking last truth about Bruntwood came undisguisably out. He was a voluptuary; only, his secret revels were all on equities, decencies, uncompelled fairnesses. Old, platitudinous tags about conduct, "Do as you would be done by," and so on, would go to this hedonist's head like new wine. He would fix ravenous teeth in some precept long dead, canonized and moldering into dust, like "Blessed are the peacemakers," and devour, whole, all that was left, no matter what it did in his vitals. Sayings of Christ's that drop upon most men like the gentle rain from heaven, pattering softly on the sound roof of the soul and giving point and piquancy to the complacent snugness within, would beat right into the unslated spirit of this incomplete person, and search and scour the interior. Browne began, as the day went on, to understand the singleness of eye that fills the whole body of a St. Francis with inadequately-shaded light. But self-sacrifice?—not a bit of it. Keeping a newspaper clean was his sport and hobby; he let his mind run on it always, just as another man will let his mind run, even in working hours, on his high hopes of his golf. He was a man of pleasure, unbridled.

Sometimes he wrote for the paper. It was not his line; his writing had almost every known imperfection.

But Mullivant made him, whenever he saw that Bruntwood's appetite was fastening on some relevant old saw as if it had been brought down that morning from Sinai, or up from Bethlehem, shining and salt as the last paradox. There had just come such a season. Bruntwood had now for some weeks been giving it out in his club-footed style that a nation, even one's own nation, may not be the better for doing a thing that, if done by a man, would get him blackballed at clubs. It was the kind of idea that skilled navigators of life will chart and buoy out like a shoal, to keep their craft well off it. Bruntwood had not that wit. Yet the things the crank said seemed to count. Even the wise found they could not just look the other way, as they would like, when some discomforting truism dug up by Bruntwood was awkwardly breaking the bands of the grave, or some two and two were being joined together that man for his peace had put asunder.

"If you or I," Mullivant said to Browne, late in that day, when Bruntwood was out of hearing, "were ever to sit down and write, with our admirable arts of persuasion, that cheating at cards is not quite the thing between nations, we should be prigs, and the stuff dead as mutton. Bruntwood can do it, though; does it as if he were telling you what's won the Derby. People listen, too—swear, but listen. They have to. The word's made flesh and dwells with 'em. They'd ignore us. But him! Crusoe couldn't ignore the live foot on the sand."

He spoke as if Bruntwood were not of his species. Browne saw better. At least, in being weather-beaten

together, the dyes of the two had stained pretty deep into each other. Bruntwood's joy, behind all his phlegm, in conceiving a duty or bearing a right restraint had at first tickled Mullivant, in his youth, then rather touched him, then animated him. Once he had thought of such things only as denials, voids, chills, provender for the worst Nonconformists, a diet of east wind; here was a marvel—a man whom they warmed and lit. Bruntwood had gone to school, too, to his friend the enjoyer of shapely utterance and imaginative play. He had been wiled into making an idol, a graven image of England, as seen on hundreds of such days as this with the lover's transfiguring eye. Pooling their whims together the two had made a joint fad of a novel—or is it antiquated?—patriotism, remote from the current modes of that virtue. For scarcely any spite went to the making of it, and no fear at all; it had not been come at by trains of reasoning, nor taken out of a book, nor was it a hot sense of having the title-deeds to a fat estate, nor a caterer's impulse to meet any demand his customers might make for special emotions. It was mere, sheer affection. A schoolboy attuned to the wisdom of the age could show in a moment that people like these two were nook-shotten, cast away far from the main march of mind, and that lust is not lust if one's own nation feels it, nor theft theft if there be no jail in which it could cause her hair to be cut. To these truths the two were impenetrable now. For one thing, they did not know the ends of the earth and had never lived on black, brown or yellow men. But what misled

them most was the way they knew England, every look of her face and the shape of its bones. English downs with dawn breaking over them seemed to put up a troubling petition that they might not be befouled. When clear-eyed men from Simla and Cairo would show that Falstaff had erred and that it is not in men but in nations that honor is a scutcheon only, the two would feel a sick rage as though some brother, who had not lived much at home, came in with a plan for making the old mother get drunk or pick pockets. No matter if people proved she would not be caught; the two would not learn; all they knew was that they did not want the Thames of their youth to be a seam in the face of a slut, or Land's End a cad's eye. When our prudent rulers abandoned our wards for Abdul Hamid to murder, Bruntwood felt as if the white-walled dale where he fished in the Peak were plastered with some physical filth of dishonor; Mullivant found that something living was hanging its head in the silent miles of river meadow up by Lechlade in the autumn twilights.

The weather was changing all day; hardy, raw air in the morning, a child's secret delight to go out in; then two or three hours of sun and racing shadows; then a whole sky cleared for one rickety tower of storm-cloud, piled floor above floor, to stalk across the hills, a mile off; while that was still lurching away top-heavily into the east a pack of thinner vapors rushed after it, overtook it, drew across it a gauzy, smoke-colored curtain, shaded in lines that slanted down eastwards, through which the towering stack

behind them showed black; and then those dropping veils had packed away in their turn, whipped in by their own fussing rear-guard; many weathers, many climates, all of them good, blowing changefully over one island that Browne could see whole now, like a raised map modeled in stone and laid, not quite flat, on the ground—indeed with one corner sunk into it. North-westward was nothing but stone—stone walls to the stony fields, stone-gray cottages, stone interleaving coal in the pits, stone sticking out rawly in streets and twisting the tips of plows. South-eastward the plaque of stone dipped and dived down as a sloping landing-stage slants into a high tide; a sea of soft clays and sands closed level over it. It was all one; he had seen affection, the only maker of Edens, render it so.

In his room that night he could not go to bed for a while, the good things that he had to think of thronged in so throbbingly, tightening the hot forehead. He had to stand at an open window to cool and breathe, looking down on the rain-washed midnight city silent under him. Presently from a neighboring window there rose the choruses of a late party, some of the voices half-tipsy and barbed with the poignancy of expiring youth. Fugitive youth, fugitive poignancy, mystical treasures flowing past in a stream. The chorus trailed off into silence, a door slammed, good-nights were heard in the resonant street; then silence congealed till from a mile away there lifted into clearness the ringing owl notes of the buffers of trucks shunted at some siding. These, too, had beauty; it

rent and enchanted and cried out for rescue from its own inarticulateness. All things had that riddlesome beauty that numbed and evoked, half inspired and half left you bewildered, dimly aware of wonderful things to be done and noble, unavailable powers in you to do them; the powers wandered about helplessly seeking the place to begin, the order to take, the one call for *them* to obey in a universe of summoning clarions. Now it came clear. From that racket of call and cross-call, impulse and counter-impulse, his new friends at Brabburn had found a way out; they, at least, were clear of the forest and marched along singing; they had pierced to the secret—he saw it now—of all the every-day miracle-doers; like corn they could make strength from clay, and could draw good cheer, like vines, out of granite and rain. They were what he had wished he might be, though it was not till now that he knew he had wished it: they were the men; if he might he would stand with them.

CHAPTER XII

“Nearing, her god breathed on her, till she seemed
More tall and spoke, like gods, compellingly.”

VIRGIL: *Æneid*, Book vi.

WHEN the End House door at Up-Felday was opened to Browne at two the next day there rose on his ear, like scent from a bottle uncorked, the voice of his host from some room within: it was murmurous, suavely petulant, tinting mere space into an atmosphere. “Figure it! Now—in October! A garden-party!” The voice, with its soft suffusiveness, shed itself out through some open door into the hall as the smell of dried rose-leaves did. “Colchicum, what things are done in thy name!”

“Father, it isn’t October at large; it’s *this* October.” June’s voice was no tint or shade, but a line, a couched spring, a pulse, elasticity.

She must be at a window, Browne thought, with her eyes on the red and gold of the garden. Late autumn had burst into radiance; London had glowed that morning when he was crossing it; liquid light, with a rosininess in it, had seemed to be washing about between the houses, like water carried in a red wheel-barrow.

“Well, then, my dearest, since ’tis so,
Since naught remains but that we go—”

Runs it not thus? Let us catch cold, then, because it

is fine. Ah! this is pleasant"—Mr. Hathersage, crossing the library door-mat, had sighted the entering Browne.

"Will you come with us?" June was saying to Browne a few minutes later, "or are you too tired? Such a garden, the Anthons'!—a piece of stage scenery, crowded with prettinesses—the last cry in quaintness, and all cut out of the side of a hill," she pattered on, playing the cordial entertainer.

Browne could only half listen. He looked at her clothes with a disconcertment. They were not the ones that he knew. Of course not. Why should they be? Yet the change seemed to hold him off from her. What she had worn had been part of her, part of her manner at any rate, worn by her as she wore her looks and remembered by him in all their gestures, and now there was this estranging lodgment, of something that might still be she, amidst new femininities.

Mr. Hathersage stood with a hand on the door. "You go to the slaughter with us?"

Browne collected his wits. Yes, he would enjoy it.

June looked at her father. "I'll tell them—shall I—to balance the cart for four?"

A faint little fussiness effervesced for a moment in Mr. Hathersage, rounding and brightening his mild eyes. "Perhaps Mr. Browne would bear with a country habit of ours—perhaps if we just drove ourselves in the—"

June understood; so did Browne, when the time to start came. The horse that had brought him up from the station was standing again at the door, but

not in the shafts of the same goodly dog-cart. A lowly, tarnished conveyance had taken its place, a shallow hollow in basket-work, such as old ladies of that period would sometimes use in the country. Some touch of spickness or spanness seemed to have faded, too, from the man who had driven Browne and who stood at the horse's head now.

June drove them the two miles through lanes scooped out of sand, under arching hedges of hazel. Sunned sand and pine, gorse and heather with bees still astir in them, sent up a warm, scented hum. It was the heart of the choiceness of Surrey. Even the blind had seen that: jimp huts and toy farms told where solvent groppers after the beauty of life had ceased groping awhile and thought they had found it; two or three preposterous, pretty palaces, hooded with hillsides of tile, tried to be seen wooing solitude. "They bring us new and pleasant neighbors," said Mr. Hathersage, eyeing without overt disrelish the newest stack of gables and vanes, chimneys and weather-boards, white paint and red. No vibration of irony could be discerned in his voice; the old patrician kept his disdain to himself to feed on: his hospitality stopped short of sharing that dainty with Browne, the last guest picked up from the highways or byways of this coarse world.

Browne saw it and chafed at a self-assurance hoisted and poised so high above the common vulgarities of arrogance. Why, it was worse, it was arrogance twice distilled, the quintessence, the finest coxcombr of exclusion. So that was why they were sitting a foot

from the ground, on faded cushions. Shabbiness, the foregoing of show, was a badge that he must have made for his caste in this mid-Surrey world of splashed money and shining and out-shining appointments. It was oppressive to think of that still, withdrawn, innermost keep where pride lived by itself, un-competing and effortless, so guarded away from the strife without that it had the leisure to pamper its own lonely and delicate love of itself with mock humilities of surrender.

Just once, in that drive, it was as if a boy with some warmer blood of merry mischief in him had lightly mounted the coping of that frigid citadel, shaking derisive fists at an uncouth besieger. June, with a quick laugh and pointing nod, drew their eyes as they passed to an arched pole, eighteen inches high, at the foot of the garden wall of a resplendent week-end cottage with a double coach-house. In the wall there were many doors, each with its title painted above it, to guard against intrusive pollutions—"Visitors' Entrance," "Coachman's Entrance," "Tradesmen's Entrance." A cock, aloft on fastidious stilts, was picking its way through the hole, and over the arch some rustic wag had hastily chalked up "Fowls' Entrance."

Browne laughed out; Mr. Hathersage laughed too, a little, and wintrily. He saw the point of everything; it was his life to do that; yet there was something in him that half withheld itself from savoring a wit that tasted so of the earth, as the delicate wonder and doubt at the rude meals of health. June's laugh,

nipped by that touch of frost, turned to a fret on the lips; she gave all her eyes to her driving; the jovial human hail from the fortress walls was suppressed; all that was left was a glimpse of hope that the garri-son might not always be wholly at one with itself. Perhaps the hope could be seen in his face when June saw it next, for when she spoke it was more in her father's vein than her father himself; she did penance jealously, making occasions for it; she started a strain of Olympian charity towards Sir Valentine Anthon, the host they were going to.

Mr. Hathersage took it up, happy in mind again. "Really a quite intelligent man, on some subjects. An oculist, now retired, a little 'perplexed wi' leisure,' perhaps. Let me advise you to ask him about the French Emperor's eyes. An entertaining story."

"He is our Lord of the Manor," said June.

"So that really we owe him," her father said, "what courtesy is in our power."

Thus did these two, though no longer quite one, agree for the moment to shut Browne formally out of their high Roman thoughts on the inrush of Vandal and Hun, on the flushed arriving stockbrokers and lawyers, or new-risen baronets shining uneasily in enlarged skies. Such was Sir Valentine Anthon, a kind little man bewildered with wealth and loss of function, and straying about his great house and fine garden like some cat bereft of its last kitten, looking for what he had hoped, during fifty years' toil, that rest after toil would be. Mr. Hathersage gave him, for some

twenty minutes, illusions of finding it, so benign is the force of good manners.

June practised the great manner too. Lady Anthon was lame; she asked, would Miss Hathersage show Mr. Browne their little attempt at gardening. June showed off the money-made tit-bits with loyal gravity; Browne must not miss the grotto, the Faun, the mechanical rainbow, Pomona's temple, the copper beech that really was copper, with fountainous twigs; turn a tap and they played. Browne met her on that level. Coldness and stiffness?—well, so let it be. So she went on, giving the poor gauds their chance, and he would not take it away. They walked and talked for a while, with their tongues keeping step in the stiff, chivalrous exercise.

Garden and house were perched like a golf-ball on a hanging lie. Wealth, as if with one cut of a spade, had sliced out for their site a flat step under the top of a woody hill. "Look!" said June, suddenly, in a new tone. They were on the terrace, the edge of that step. A balustrade, late Italian and florid, held it in, seeming to keep the whole place from slipping downhill. From the lawn, where people were playing, a tennis-ball had just gone over the coping. They looked over, watching it roll half a mile down steep turf, with precarious persistence, now almost motionless, then again quickening. It came to rest in a ditch.

Browne let his breath go. "In the crevasse!" he said.

She laughed. For a moment they were on that other mountain again.

"It's good here," he said, looking out, with rising gusto; no mere exercise now. He backed away two or three yards from the balustrade; over it, then, the first thing that his eye met was a windmill at work, two miles away, low on the wide floor between two ranges of downs. Beyond it, a mile further off, was another windmill; a third, yet a mile or two further away, gleamed intermittently, like a revolving light, some bright part of its sails, no doubt, catching the westering sun at a certain point in each revolution. The three mills measured the receding plain; mile behind mile it lay stilled with autumn and distance, only the sails moving. He stood enriching it with his enjoyment.

"Is *nothing* flat to you?" she said, almost pettishly.

He laughed. "All that plain is!"

She did not laugh. To her sense the flatness of flat things was beginning to be re-filled with the power to thrill that it had when she was a child and when wood thrilled her fingers because it was tepid and iron because it was cool. She felt she was worked on, and some resistent sentinel within her stood to its arms. She said, almost roughly, "How moral you are!"

He was puzzled. "I moralize?"

"You 'find good in everything' anyhow."

"Good fun? There *is* a good lot. Is it priggish to like it?"

"It's a rebuke to us others."

"Rebuke? No. Defiance. Avaunt, you ascetics. It's you have the taint of saints about you."

"We, the incurious, unthankful—?"

"You the people who give up, who lay down, who go without things."

"Things we don't want, we're so blind to them."

"By your own will, isn't it, so that then you can walk through the fair and not gape at the things there, and fiddles can play and you not want to dance?"

"I love dancing."

"Oh, good! Bad, I mean, and most welcome."

Slowly and not by regular steps they made their way back towards frank friendliness, each trying the mind of the other and finding that it had the right resilience, that it could give where you touched and then spring back into shape. "I suppose," she said, without petulance now, "there's a time to dance and a time to refrain from dancing."

"None to refrain from enjoying, one way or other. Wouldn't that be as if Adam salted the garden?"

She was grave again. "Is that fair? I don't mean to me, of course. I've never given anything up in my life. All I've done is to fail to like splendid things—Rome and the Alps and everything. Still, I know there's a way of giving up things, at the right time, that makes it what's most worth doing of all—giving up food and health even, willingly?"

"Unsourably? Do they love giving them up?"

"I'll ask you that when you've seen them?"

"Oh, it's your friends at Cusheen?"

"They could have been, not rich of course, but less poor. They could have had help in their fishing. They gave it all up."

"Why on earth?"

She winced as if treated rudely. "Perhaps for no reason on earth," she said, "but a good one elsewhere—they may have supposed," and then she winced worse at her own lapse towards crossness and rhetoric. "Oh, I can't tell you about it," she flurriedly said, and colored, shamefaced or angry.

He looked away over the champaign, giving her time. "Two windmills—three," he counted slowly aloud, lest silence should hang too heavily; "three and—is it a fourth, but not working, up higher?"

She had collected herself. "That's the Mill on the Hill. It's deserted. It has a great view on fine nights: you see to the sea and to London—gleams on the waves, and the glow over London. It links them."

"Oh, good!" He thought of Mullivant's jewel-some England, threaded on such strings.

She thought of the Dent Rouge. "You would like it. Guy must arrange. You cross—when?"

"To Dublin? To-morrow night."

"Guy must take you to-night. I must see him." She looked round. "He ought to be here; he was to have come here straight from town, with a friend."

"Newman?"

"Yes."

"I see Newman coming, in custody."

With a quick flinch, as if snatching clear of some foulness, June interposed a tall bush between them and Newman, now hobbling nearer, the prey of a voluble, loud lady.

"I think it so hard," the lady was saying, "to know what to get taught to one's children—about religion,

you know—in the way of a special belief, you know. If only Pip, our boy, were more like his father! Dear George was always so good and steady; *he* never needed any religious support.”

There was no failing to hear it; June's eyes and Browne's met on the vision of George's established soul, Browne's twinkling at sight of that fortress, June's unamused, only scornful. The mother made no pause. “The girls, of course, *must* be taught something. With all this spiritual trouble that there is, even in quite nice novels, now, it may be so painful for a young girl at dinner, or at a dance, if she has nothing at all to say about that sort of thing.”

“Feel out of it, eh?” Newman filled up a pause of an instant.

“So painfully! And then the world is so full of pain already, I do want to spare my darlings any I can; only it's so hard to know what is *right*!”

“Sure to be some little shilling book about it,” said Newman, “if only one knew. Or what d'you say to—?” The next words were blurred.

The lady broke in penetratingly: “Oh, don't you know? Dear Miss Hathersage *is* such a Catholic!”

June drew off at the name, with a hot cheek and cold voice, hedged with proud privacies. “There is my brother,” she said, “I'll go to him. Don't come.”

For a moment or two her last words immobilized Browne. They were imperious, as if she meant, “There—it is talk about me. Hear the worst.” What did it matter to her, in her pride, that he should be planted there, eavesdropping?

The lady was babbling on. "Why, she gets red if you say *Roman* Catholic just. And, if she were I, she'd simply go to a priest and ask him what to do, and then do it, and then if it went wrong it wouldn't be her fault. That's what's so nice for them. Oh, it's so cruel to have to think out all these things for oneself. I do really feel sometimes the Reformation must have been all a mistake, they worry me so—or was it the Renaissance when the Catholics split off from the Church of England?"

"I 'spect both helped," said Newman, cautiously.

"They're sure to have," said the lady.

Browne had marked the later prattle too little to smile. Able to move again now, he went to greet Guy, whom June had left.

Yes, there was almost the fullest of moons to-night, Guy said; Browne must certainly see the big view. "Quite a thing not to be missed." Guy spoke as if no one who had failed to see it could quite know how trite the world was.

Sunset had reddened when June approached Aubrey, people were leaving, dew falling. "You heard?" she imperiously asked, as if an hour had not passed.

"The ribaldry? Yes. And I've met Mr. Roads since, the wonderful husband. He offered to buy me. I fear I was rude."

She broke in. She was august with an exaltation of wrath. "I want to tell you," she said, "what I—wouldn't—couldn't just now. People like that woman, rich, idle people—has Mr. Roads told you, they own all the basest papers there are?—luxurious people—

oh, I know I'm one—may talk as she does, but at Cusheen the women would see their sons drown before they'd be helped by any one who had broken vows of religion. And I love them for it, I love them. I'll tell you—”

She paused, shaken, as if it were too difficult, even now. But she looked taller, seemed to have straightened out and shot up like a flame; like a flame her beauty rose too, flushed up into the cheek and blazed in the eye; it warmed and might burn, was splendor and danger, lit from some lamp high out of sight and rooting down for its strength to central fires of passion under the earth. Browne was awed; this was her real life, then—so he mused; she had hold of infinite things by that old handle, odd-looking to him, of a creedful of dogmas. What matter the shape of the handle, though, if only it held? He said, “You are chivalrous,” letting the words go, unintended, like a held breath.

She looked down from the height of her queenliness, shamefaced a little. Had she been ranting? “We ought to be,” she answered humbly, touching the cord of some lay fringe of a Roman Order that went round her waist, “we belted knights;” she smiled ruefully. Had she been boasting? That was her silencing thought while Browne was thinking what an earth's wonder she looked, with that noble confusion quenching the glow still aflame where a noble pride had lit it! She did not go on.

“The garden is empty!” she cried in amazement. She had come back to herself. A star was blinking

out bravely, alone in the violet vault over the darkening weald. Her father was wrapping his throat in the hall. They drove back through lanes of somber enchantment, where flat shapes of motionless trees lay black on the crimson west whither the homing horse, sped by his own single thought, hastened them eagerly.

CHAPTER XIII

“A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honor, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof.”

Ecclesiastes vi. 2.

THE dining-room at the End House might have made a kitchen in heaven, it was so cosily chaste in its lowliness of attire, so purged of decorative sin. White wood; many white tiles; white curtains—not of lace; rush-bottomed chairs fastidiously simple; all along one wall, a dresser, with plates on it, ranged like their toiling kin elsewhere, but these had leisure and were of breeding; some had histories; one recorded, like a medal, an old sea-fight. Browne was now told things about it not printed in books but only borne down the stream of a ruling caste's gossip, its heir-looms of intramural tattle—how that fight's hero, a darling of credulous England's, had flown a white flag in another battle, the next year, with an actress of small parts, a notable pirate in that age. Mr. Hather-sage told it with nice touches of irony, reticent sympathy, allowance. “‘But on the field’—how does it go?” He ended the tale with a modest sham-failing of memory. “Is it—

“‘But on the field of love alone
The glory lies in flying’?”

He was talking his best to-night about the great world that he knew. Through the glass that he put to Browne's eyes it heaved into sight like some old moon, waste and huge, a cold globe of spent craters. A Queen's page, an attaché, a member of Parliament, cousin and private secretary to a Premier—he had been all these; many good things, as men count, had come up to him of themselves, to be tasted, and all had proved themselves middling. He had been at the hubs of the most dazzlingly whirling of wheels and had found at each a core of slowness, not the concentration of the speeding glory of the tire, but its retardation, down to tedium. He flowed out in anecdotes now. “‘If you want to love your kind,’” he would quote between one and the next, “‘you must not expect too much from them.’” All his stories were, surely, reductive of over-high hopes. He had known “everybody worth knowing,” had heard the most famously saintly of laymen bully his wife, had opened the letter in which a sage asked for a knighthood, and seen earth-shaking statesmen pushed, pulled, or bodily borne through their seismic labors by mute, inglorious clerks.

“Moses' arms were held up, after all,” he would add, in excuse. He had no spite, no bias of creed, class or race. A Roman prelate was hero to one of the stories: “To hell with you!” this divine had once said to his Irish chaplain, from whom the story had come with the note—“I never before heard his Grace say the like of that, drunk *or* sober.” Or some royal duke was so frugal as not to give people enough to eat

when they dined at his house, nor light to eat it by; "You used to be bidden to darkness and gnashing of teeth." Wherever some illusion of some one's youth might reasonably have perished, the round, rimmed, hedge-sparrow eyes would brighten frostily for a moment.

As dinner went on, the rest fell silent, or only put in, now and then, some ministering query. In pauses the waiting butler seemed like stillness in motion; light airs had begun to roam round the house at dark; they rose on the ear as if thrown into relief by those feet's quietude. Guy was silent contentedly; surveys of mankind, every man steeped in his humor, and none momentous or rare, were the food Guy had been raised on. Two brothers, still in the raising, were at table too, boys of twelve and fourteen in mere count of years and inches, but old already, in many parts of the soul, as Ecclesiastes or autumn; grave, rational, quenched, too skeptical even to disbelieve with a will, they had outgrown both ardor and rudeness. They cracked nuts sedately, and listened, and aged.

June had become silent too, more enigmatically. Her eyes were open and blank as glassed seas, her lips symbols unused; so, Browne thought, might one paint the face of Japheth or Shem when he would not see his father's nakedness. Once their looks met, his staunchly vacant, as if, for all he knew, she, too, might be sere, like her family of yellow leaves, and not merely loyal to them; her looks withheld as proudly the least gleam of thanks to his eyes for offering her no ray of comprehension. Outside, as their emptied

eyes met, the wind was sniffing at the house; a rosebough knocked on a pane lightly. He fancied her ears caught at the sounds: could something in her be stifling, in this distilled air, for that rude and strong one? No sign. Her father's voice, like a clear, tiny bell, tinkled on; Guy's laugh, with its musical, infinitesimal chimes, still struck in to help out the case against having one's breath ever taken away, and the little boys listened and cracked more nuts without greed, and ripened towards the grave.

Dinner over, the boys went to bed from the half-lighted drawing-room where Mr. Hathersage shuffled softly from point to point, with the flow of his talk falling slack, till he faded away almost insensibly, like a cadence, into his study; its rose-shaded lamp on a letter-strewn table shown through an open door beyond a darkling second drawing-room, as harbor lights shine across intervening seas. He left the doors open, and so, from their own half-light, the rest saw through the medial darkness to where he sat, image-like, in a luminous niche. Soon Guy—he was sorry—must go off to read Roman Law, with a coach shared by Newman and him, at Brunt Farm, where Newman had rooms. When Guy had gone, and some topic with him, June plunged at another abruptly, with forced airiness, like one who keeps things going for a wager. “About Brabburn? Is it appalling?”

“It's glorious.” He put it high, by instinct, to bind himself over to fight out his line.

She said “Oh?” rather coldly, as if to ask, not “Is

that chaff?" but "What special line of chaff may that be?"

He tried to laugh. "A lepers' island, you'd heard?"

"No, but—well, lusterless."

"Waterloo was, till they fought there."

"But—Brabburn! A by-word! Tennyson, Ruskin, Thackeray, Meredith even—how they all scorned it!" She warmed to the conflict, finding it real.

So did he. "Dante scorned Genoa; yet Garibaldi came from it." He winced at this slip—to a Catholic—made in his heat. "Columbus too," he added hastily.

His visible twinge of compunction made her lower her point till it passed. "Father," she said, "had a friend, once, from Brabburn, a merchant. They were both in Parliament then. He stayed here when I was a child. Telegrams came for him all day; the baker's wife, who keeps the post-office, was ill afterwards. He was 'nice'; a little wooden, but quite 'nice,' only—"

Browne, too, re-engaged. "Only—from Brabburn. See how it clings. If you could say 'I am from Brabburn,' your friends would say in a strained, gentle voice, 'Ah!—from Brabburn?' and try to be kind to you, as if you had said 'My grandfather was hanged' and they said 'Oh?' softly and quitted the subject—stole out on tiptoe. Or they'd say 'Well, and how do you like your life in Brabburn?' to show they knew you were a missionary and not really one of the cannibals."

"Would that be a happiness?"

"*The* happiness; wouldn't it? Brabburn is London before they'd built Westminster Abbey; Oxford

before universities came; it's pre-Shakespeare Stratford. All the overblown flowers are seeding all round it; *it* isn't out yet; it's coming. The big things are all to be done there still—not just the crowding up after they're done, the commemorating and gushing."

June had tinder for that spark; she could light at the thought of being in at the painful birth of a great glory. Yet she must muster against it what forces she might; she could not tell why; some half-heard internal imperative set her throwing up dams against some half-apprehended flood. "The big things?" she asked.

"The undone ones."

"What are they?"

"If one could say, one could do them. They're all novel, indefinable, aren't they, like building Rome—till they're done? What's the South Pole like? To say is to get there."

"One could sail south; one could start anyhow. But how start, even, at Brabburn?"

"Why not write every day in a newspaper for forty years?"

"Oh!"

"You disdain it?"

"Not what you're going to do, at Cusheen, just for once. But then—"

"One mustn't wholly 'sink into a journalist'? 'Mere ephemeral writing,' and so on? Isn't that just 'Ah—from Brabburn!' over again? A whole craft, almost, is unmade as yet, waiting, crying out to be brought to life, as the place does."

"But *can* it be ever made noble? Think of the—" She named Roads' last triumph in marketing meanness fresh daily.

"Can flesh face steel? Think how sheep run from it!"

She gave a small confident laugh which might have meant, "Don't deliver your whole cause into my hands by extravagance." "Don't say that the work is like a soldier's," she said.

"No. Drums and bugles don't play while you're doing it."

"It's not facing death."

"The death-rate in Brabburn is thrice that of Aldershot."

"But—in war?"

"Brabburn babies died faster last summer than our troops did at Colenso."

She chilled, hating the line of thought. "You be-little brave men?"

"I honor them even up to the height of being sure they chafe at the thought, when medals and orders come—'They burnt Joan of Arc; they put Wallace to death; they lionize me.' Wasn't that General Neville you spoke with, to-day, at the party, the old, sad Bayard?"

"My god-father; yes."

"I saw him in uniform once. You have, of course. You remember his coat was too small for all the medals and stars and crosses? What a life to have had! And can't you fancy him now looking back over it, asking himself is there any last crown of joy that he has

missed, and saying, ' Yes, one—to have had all those things to do, and no one applaud ' ? ”

She could not fancy it: sex, with its specialized generosity, would not let her; had their talk been of some achievement and peril kept for women alone, she could have done it: but then he could not have. Now he was eager; he would not give in; and the lamp had burnt propitiously low; the sinking fire looked old; he pressed on: “ Seems, somehow, as if a brave act began to go bad as soon as praise forms on it—when the flies buzz up and swarm on it—all the little timorous people. They soil it; they would have called the man a crank, perhaps even a sneak, if they'd seen him go at it, at first; when it's done he's some one whose ship has come in; he has broken the bank; he has come off, and all cowards swear by him. They can be dodged, though. I found that out at Brabburn. There's work done that nobody daubs with praise, and people are used up in doing it well, in the dark, and sneered at for being staunch. They get battles to fight where public opinion's for running away, and the man who runs best is given a title: a man who ran till he dropped might get a grave in the Abbey.”

At each rhetorical sentence's end he thought “ Have I done for myself in her mind? ” and then made the next more provocative still, doggedly putting his all in jeopardy, as a man searches a lonely house for armed burglars, forcing himself from room to room. She was not with him in sympathy; that he could see. To her the martial qualities were of blood royal; they had divine rights; she hated any upstart virtue that dared

to measure itself against them. And yet, he was giving himself away; she could see that; it challenged her own spirit; besides, he had raised the image of a lost battle fought out to the end; and that thrilled, though only an image. So she said, with some haughtiness, yet half-relentfully: "Does the world contain such a—journalist?" getting the last word out with a gulp at its evil taste.

"Two, Bruntwood and Mullivant. You never heard of them?"

"No."

"Though your brother employs them? Good! See how nameless journalists are!"

She was forestalled. What he said was just what she would have said, but she would have meant "Inglorious trade!" And now she could not say it. She could not even think it. It was as though he had looked past her, over her shoulders, to some one behind, more generous, and she had turned to see who it was and found that this other person was she herself, her more real self, and that what she had taken to be herself before was only a screen, an outworn, second-rate version of her, put up for show or defense. "But what do they *do* that's so fine?" she asked hastily, in her first chafing at this disablement of her outworks.

"Just sit at a desk every night, snubbing baseness. It canvasses them."

"To do what?"

"To tell people they're right when they're not." He held in the rhetoric now, a defiant instinct of straightness shunning the use of the jockeying word

where it might not hinder, but help. "Not very thrilling?" He prompted her to be unmoved if she would.

"Well," she said suspensively, out of her inward confusions of rearrangement, "no."

"No rushing out of the ranks, with armies admiring?"

"I suppose they're esteemed in their own profession," she ventured, attempting the austere tone proper to safe assumption.

"You spoke of the —," he said. "That's the head of the trade—Mr. Roads' last paper. How could Mr. Roads esteem people who don't care to sell lies? If praise soils, the game is clean as the sea. Oh, you want Birkenhead decks? You'll get 'em to stand on, but you'll be alone, or with one or two more, and the rest of your corps sneering at you 'Crank!' 'Fad-dist!' 'It's moral cowardice, really!' while they swarm into the boats. It'll be keeping straight *gratis*—just the bare bones of decency."

He spoke as if it were she at the cross roads: she answered as if it were he; she tempted him.

"If you lived as a soldier you might die like one."

"A ball in the brain, you mean, at the head of a charge?"

"Would you give that up too?"

"You'd have to. I don't believe Enoch miracles come off in Brabburn. Cancer, a pain in the heart or spine for a few years, a week's suffocation—there's no bolting from them. You'd have to face death—the true horrors of it, the 'natural' ones." He still forced the note of offense, lest he should shirk it. She

never hedged and he would not; better be cleanly maimed by the utter loss of her than gain toleration by bating a jot of his distasteful ardors.

Surely enough her air was one of distaste. She was chillily bewildered. Not that, like quite vulgar souls, she hugged in mean panic what was current—the filed judgments and registered valuations. They were worth something: spots of dry ground amid waters, at least they gave foothold. But June had the fortitude of equity; she could be harsh to her own fears and coldly refuse to deny that footholds, even one's own, may have to go sometimes, with none in sight to take their places; a haughty fairness ruled her and scorned the cheap conceit of finality in her own old appraisements and took it for granted that what any one else said for a view that was not hers must be less than the most that he could say for it if he would. But she was bewildered and disarranged. Things that he said made queer new calls on her; they assumed she was a person, detached, like a nation, with frontiers, a being autonomous, equal, free and yet novelly burdened, bound to make out for herself what was right and what wrong and to stand by whatever result she came to. June dismayedly felt that she never yet had been a person, only a piece of the flesh of a family, and a cell in its brain. What thought of hers had she not taken on trust? Which of her admirations had not been formed by proxy? Was there, of all the things she had said to-day, one that had not been spoken by rote?

When June was dismayed her face and voice would

grow icy; she looked most distantly regal when everything in her was praying for help, or running to and fro, seeking a life-belt, or abasing itself in deep dusts of contrition. It was beyond Browne to read her then. He did not see that the frozen aspect was helplessness steeling itself not to wince. He only saw her austere and spiritually tall, looking securely out from untold reserves of cold certitude.

So for a silent minute each of them thought how awesomely strong a case it must be that could count for so much in the other's mind, till Mr. Hathersage, brushing the carpet's nap with soft feline pads, came across to bring them a find from his night's reading, a sight of the life of the old British India—how envoys would set out on missions to courts many hundred miles off, and not move in the heat of the day nor in the dark of the night; a few miles on a walking elephant's back before breakfast, and then the long day's peace. He read to find such things and show them to people, but also to keep up the good accent with which he could talk to many kinds of learned men in the dialects of their own several studies, as he talked French and Italian. He read out cooingly, resting himself on the thought of that quaint leisure, unlike to-day's racketsy haste.

They listened to the urbane treason to life; they did not let their looks meet. She, as the helpless will sometimes do, tried to be angry with Browne; who, after all, was this stranger, that he should be let into knowledge of what was failing under her? Browne caught no glimpse of that; for all he saw, she might

be heart and soul with her father now, and life, which is always to-day, would never be anything to her, either, but some bawling cad who must be endured with only such compensations as irony has for its right users. Then Mr. Hathersage yawned with a candor so child-like that it was not rude; rather, a confidence; he seemed to have gone, with his guest, behind Madam Courtesy's back, and to trust his guest not to tell her. "Youth, youth!" he crooned, with a little shiver, on hearing about their plan for the mill: to go they were only waiting for Guy. "'Lusum it Mæcnas, dormitum ego,'" he murmured, and crept up to bed as ten struck.

June, moving about to replace a used book, stood still for a second; she looked up, through a window and through the glass roof of a greenhouse outside. Browne's eyes, following hers, saw a round moon, remote and abstract beyond the filtering screen of double glass and interposed room, ride high in bare skies.

"What a night!" he said. Indeed Lorenzo and Jessica might have capped ecstasies in it.

She said "Yes," with a reluctance, as though her mind flinched at the scent of some twilight idea not yet made out, as horses will sweat and hold back, at night, with a dim but positive sense of the approach of something of which all they know is the way their ears twitch and their breath goes.

CHAPTER XIV

"A dream that a lion had dreamed
Till the wilderness cried aloud,
A secret between you two,
Between the proud and the proud."

W. B. YEATS.

THEY set out. It was calm now; in the stillness they heard the owls calling and answering, far off and near, in firm notes; one huge inquisitive fellow came floating over their heads in a chain of linked circles that moved with them, lying outspread on the air without sound or effort. They passed through a hamlet sleeping its deepest already against the coming of daylight and work; only in one or two cottages, ruled, as June knew, by babies, did lighted panes make yellow squares against the milky radiance that filled outer space. Past the hamlet they toiled up a path in loose sand to the edge of the Hurtwood, a huge common, miles square, of pine, gorse and heather capriciously patterned out, here a few acres of one, and then another.

The first mile of the three to the mill they walked almost silently. Guy smoked, by June's leave; June laved her cheeks in the cool air—they had dust and heat on them, she felt; dust of her father's and brother's probing and peering about among things that turned dusty under their hands at their incantatory

murmur of "Yes—everywhere cobwebs!" heat of her inner fight against giving them up, those two—and against not giving them up. Oh, it was all heat and a maze, and unbearable things calling out to be done, this way and that: impossibles had to be chosen among.

By the end of the mile she thought she had put things in order within. She tested it—tried how well she could make talk of trifles—of Italy, Oxford, the Temple, where Guy now lived and Aubrey had meant to. She thought she was getting on well. As they walked, the mill, now in sight, black on the sky-line, bulked always larger and higher. June pattered away at her skimmy stuff; had Aubrey noticed, the air was warm where the pines were, but it chilled at once where the gorse began, and was it not sure to be fine all night?—the pheasants were roosting far out on the boughs. She scarcely waited for answers. She clung nervously to the lead, the social command, the hostess's suzerainty over people's relations.

The mill rose high out of pines, with tough old heather under them, leathery stems and broomy sprays; feet caught in them or slipped on them; it was a breathless stumble up the last slope; even June's voluble trepidation was put to silence; before they had reached the top Guy, the man of inaction, was puffing. Arrived at the door he dropped on a long bench beside it. Many farmers had polished the seat already a century since, sitting there to talk of Boney and how the great war went, while the meal that they had come for was being ground out to the end.

"For me," fluted Guy, "enough of ambition.

J'y suis, j'y reste. In, you others; follow aloft the phantom of æsthetic repletion. Here, below, man wants but little—a warm coat, tobacco, woolly gloves—the means of life and of contemplation. I have them. In, my friends; leave me.”

“Oh, Guy!” June broke out to upbraid, and then stopped in dismay at her own dismay and trod down as a weakness the instinct that had cried out.

In at the little unfastened door the two stooped, with Guy's last benediction on their attire amid the dusty hazards of the interior: forty years had the mill been disused. They lit match after match; they picked a way across the rotten boards of the floor to the first of the three ladders leading up from story to story.

“Ought to be chockful of tramps,” he said at one pause. They listened. No sound came, of moving or snoring. Each heard only the other's breath rise and fall in its own rhythm. “Harvest late, perhaps.”

“Yes, they'll be all in the barns,” she said quickly, wanting to know, by the sound of her voice, that she was at ease. Strange things followed. In that domed bell of bricks one's voice rang; hers, when so magnified, seemed to herself like some private gesture spied upon with a telescope. Why? What were the words themselves? Nothing. That was the trouble: the nullness of words was ceasing to avail; screens were falling; speech, the old veil, without which the mind might be naked and shamed, was lifting like mist.

They had to walk the floor daintily, not to drop through to the cellarage. One board in two had been stripped off, to cook some past wanderer's supper or to

warm supperless hands. The moon gave no help; all it did was to baffle, leaking through chinks of the shuttered windows to play freakish fantasies of spots and streaks before their feet; once it tricked June into putting a foot through the crumbling paste of lath and plaster between two cross beams. She gave the slightest quick cry and then snatched back, before she stood safe, the hand that she had held out and he taken.

"Oh, let us get up," she said oppressively, "out of this hole," and cut off his next words as if they might hit her. "Do let us hurry," she pressed.

They hurried, and clambered at last out into the air through a window-like door, and stood on a ledge of lead that ran round the base of the roof, leaning their backs against the lead dome, with the gawky sails above and below them fixed at the angles which chance first, and then rust more rigidly, had ordered for their last quiescence. As they leant he heard her breath's troubled stir; it was like some small animal struggling silently.

"You're fagged?" he asked, and, quick in alarm, "giddy?"

"No, no!" she jerked out, with impatience, not at him, but at the wild Daphne in her that could have leaped clear from their ledge into space. She chid it down—vain, immodest timidity; shame on its presaging!

"Look!" she said, ruling her voice. "What we came for!" She pointed. From east and south, a mile or two off, there ran out to meet one another two long-backed hills, black masses, and then they stopped

before meeting and dropped sharply down to the floor of the great southern weald, leaving between them a space like the bright gap that is cut out of the dark when the curtain goes up on a stage. The gap was living with light; beyond it the moon's full lamp hung high over the plain, where ground mists, visionary in this light, were afloat on illuminated meadows.

He made some sound, not of words, and she forced a light tone. "Does that mean you feel just a kind of balked willingness to be charmed? The feeling one has at a Baedeker place with three asterisks? I'm sorry. I shouldn't have trumpeted so." She rushed on; she had to be talking; what might not be heard if a stillness came, what flood topping its banks? Low, rolling pine music was round them: she clutched at the topic. "Isn't it like the noise of London, far off, heard from Kensington Gardens—the middle of them?"

"Yes."

"Do you know, it never quite ceases? There's no air so still?"

"No?"

She kept her voice sounding. "Strange, how easy it is to tell that soughing noise from the murmuring of beeches!"

"Yes, or from dry grass when it shrills."

She had wished him to talk, but now, when he did, there sprang up in her, sudden, touching, disarming, a sureness that he too was doing what she was; he too was far out at sea, as alone and unhelped as she, on his own little improvised raft of words, the first comers to

hand, all that he had to put between self-mastery and deep waters. Her peril drew back; she felt, for the moment, sorry only for him; she saw him a child that has some need, or pain, but will not cry out.

"Look! The sea!" Her voice was self-forgetful for the first time. "Quick, while the gleam lasts."

She pointed out southward, but he did not look the right way. "Quick—it's going," she said. Trying eagerly to put him right, she touched his arm with a hand.

He did not look, even then; he said to himself, "The kind hand!" as if he were alone and caressing a memory that enchanted. Half aroused from that, he looked round and down and met eyes that were upturned and shone, bent on him, lost in him; some film was on them, like that on profoundly stilled pools, yet they quivered; each little glistening lake vibrated unbroken; they swayed as a moored boat sways in a stream and yet is moored tautly. Then he too lost all hold but that; all of him lived along the line of his gaze into those deeps. Not like people who choose what to do, or who think "This may be right," or "Thus far may one go," they drew to each other. There was that thing to do in the world, nothing else; the nobleness of life was to do thus. Yet in this rush of their first rapture each of their staunch souls was ruled by the firm powers built up in itself through all its continent youth, she to a gallant trust that would have given him even her lips, and he to a passionate guard over passion; he kissed only the lids of her eyes as they closed on the love that they had let in.

How long had they clung so? Neither could tell. The rolling pine music had rolled on through lives and round worlds. It is said that in dreams you may live years in the instant in which you are awaked. Guy had not called, the moon still hung where she did, when each drew loose a little from the other's arms and looked at the face which had once been unwon. Speech had to come. She broke their descent to that earth. "The sea!" she said, letting them down on the wings of a playfulness; "you never answered me."

"It was so long ago."

"I must show you again." She pointed to where, through a rent torn in drift mist, a sheen was seen dancing. "The moon on the Channel," she said, and then, simply: "You have not religion. Yet you are near it."

"I!" he said, wondering.

"You're like God, the way a child is like a father. You can do things in His way. 'The earth is His and He made it,' and you can look at things and they're new; they're made at that moment, and the morning and the evening are the first day." She spoke almost wildly, as if she fluttered wild wings against the walls of inexpressiveness that cage love.

He cherished her, soothing those wings. "Love, it is love; it is like that; I felt it to-night—you remember, at dinner, the way the wind prowled and whined round the house. I caught myself laughing with glee at the very thought of a house, a room, the first room ever made—the cute little cube of still warmth safe and snug in the middle of all the rush of coldness."

He laughed, and her mood drew in to his. "And I sat by my fire last night," she responded, "and suddenly felt a sort of glow of the triumph the man must have had who first lit one."

"The jolly miracle!"

"Yes, warming his toes."

"We're being born, really," he said. "The first time was nothing—mere passing out of sleep into a doze."

"Yes, all the dear hum and thud of the big world thrown away, wasted on us."

"Yes, or only just booming and droning on into a place in the ends of old dreams."

The two drifted down the same eddying current of reverie; each voice trailed the very rhythm of the other. "But now—" As they breathed that together, too, their eyes joined and were tangled again. She nestled close, barring everything out of her heart but the moment's indestructible joy. Let everything wait but that; she had to be harvesting. Long afterwards, over her head as it lay against him, his voice came to her, from distances; he had come out of their trance; he must have been—yes, she was sure he had been turning back to what she had said: "religion"—she heard the word and then "it's dim to me, all that side," he was saying; "not ugly darkness, or cruel; only an end that comes to light, harmlessly, the way it does in the evening."

The words were being pressed out of him, one by one, each of them hard sought, for the help it might give to a frankness that tried not to hurt. She gave a

slight moan, not at his words, but at the breaking of her ecstasy. He did not know that.

Aroused, she looked up with eyes wet with tenderness; tenderness shook and lowered her voice, it had possessed her so. He did not know. How could he think love for him stronger than that mystic passion of which he knew nothing except that half the world seemed to be moved by it? He saw only the shock of his creedlessness bruising her.

She saw part of his trouble and broke out in consolations, assurances, hopes—he might find faith at Cusheen; there were miracles there—he would see; one might happen to him. “When you come back I shall look out from the walls for you, shading my eyes with my hands. I shall know by the light round your head.” Her voice had that wildness again; she was rapt, and he could not analyze. Her exaltation was beautiful to him; he gloried in it; and yet in those transports she seemed to be less his; lustrous, as visions are, she took on, too, the precariousness of a vision as if, when she knew him for what he was, she might fade back, with her kind eyes still on him, into estranging brake and mist.

Panic seized him; he wanted her back; to hold her he took her name, now his to caress, and played with it—what name was like it—June, the sweet o’ the year?

Why, his, she retorted; Aubrey, Aubrey, it had the dawn in it—rose-colored mists, and the first lark, and diamonded lawns.

They flitted from this to that, not talking much about love, nor like lovers in books, for there were no

readers there who had to understand them. They rambled; they made little rushes hither and thither, taking possession of new corners of Eden with little happy, irrelevant, incoherent cries of discovery.

“Twelve o'clock and a starry night, but a wind rising.” Guy's voice came up to them, placid and cool as spring water. He had strolled out from his bench; his cigarette's end could be seen, a pulse of light, rising and falling. “Is London in sight, good people?”

Oh—London? They looked for it. Clouds had mounted the north-east sky on the wind, their under side sullenly flushed with a turbid glow, with more of darkness in it than light. That was London, flaring sootily up to heaven. More clouds rose fast; the wind roughened; the two shivered on their high perch. They groped their way down in thickening darkness; the moon was put out. But he held her hand now. Blow wind, come blackness and winter, he held her hand. All the way home the cries of the owls, the bark of a fox, the far-away whistle of a night mail were calls blown on bugles and clarions, tossing triumphantly up and down, here clear on the crest and there lost in the trough of the long waves of sound now heaving on seas of murmuring pines.

CHAPTER XV

“When that I was and a little tiny boy.”

Twelfth Night, Act v. Sc. I.

BROWNE was legging it hard up and down the deck before the mail boat cleared Holyhead Harbor and struck out for—well, for what? What was Ireland more than a word to him? How would it feel to be there? Now that he asked, he found out that he had not even a formed expectation. What a young ass he must have been not to question his Irish parents more; they must have loved to talk about everything Irish, yet scarcely a word of what they had said occurred to him now as he went back the way they had come. He rummaged his early memories. Vivid and small they came back as his walk quickened, the things they used to recall of their life before he was born—the infinitesimal flat at Florence, the vintage at Dijon, at Bellinzona a grumpy innkeeper, the doctor at Paris who talked bad metaphysics; each recollection began to shine out, as his mind warmed, like one small picture on a bare wall. But almost everything Irish had faded. Oral tradition went back no further than those two years of foreign travel before he was born.

They must have come to England to nest for him. That must have been why they pitched upon Strand-on-the-Green, with mid-London and all its good schools within reach, and bought the ugly small house

looking out sunnily on to the Thames which no one could build over. Houses, of course, had been cheap on that decayed waterway of moldering names—Chiswick, Brentford, Isleworth, places with foreshores lined with leavings of atrophied occupations, with fly-blown taverns, ferries that only just paid; barge-builders' wharves from which the ring of hammers, turned to music by the liquid sounding-board, came always slower than last year; eyots with banks slipping down and baring the roots of great trees, nobody minding; stretches of ageing green mud between the eyots and the mainland, with water-logged boats, and bones of old barges, sticking half out of it. Shutting his eyes he stood still for a moment; yes, he could place each faded green summer-house, speckled with burst paint blisters, rotting away at the river end of the long-grassed garden of some house to let, the pleasure, no doubt, in its day, of some Georgian cit.

He walked on, still more gaily; the vivid image of melancholy things delights happy people, as firelight gains a last charm from the sound of dripping eaves. And merely to image anything was delight; how one's mind leaped about, running to this side and that, as one walked, like a dog out with a man! He let it; he looked on, amused, almost patronizing; it brought half-forgotten old things to his feet for sport, as retrievers do—the first joy of the river, forbidden at first, and how he had won the freedom of it by force and fraud, the furtive wadings at first; the perception, when a ninth birthday brought manhood, that now he must swim; the swift, guilty stripping among the

osiers in April; the drying with handkerchief and cap, and then the return home, the detected damp curls and blue nose and the slapping and putting to bed; and, next day, more swimming practice, but just after breakfast, so that all the rest of the morning might go to running about at high speed and rolling down a grass slope, to induce perspiration and dirt, for safety; and how, with these precautions, the cause had marched prospering till he could throw off at dinner, as if by the way, the remark that now he could swim right across at high tide. No storm had broken; his father had only asked him "What stroke?"—a luminous question. The duck never lived that would like to hatch hens.

Recollection gamboled along, taking the order of time—how, when once free of the river, he caulked with red lead, penuriously saved up for, a marvelous old canoe that a former tenant had left in a shed. Why, aboard her he must have spent almost every holiday hour for five or six years, ravished with the perpetual entertainment of seeing the way rivers work and the way they look while working—all the various symbolic boilings and twirls of surface eddies over different submerged objects; the wayward-seeming tricks of silting and scouring that drew and re-drew the lines of channels; the consternation of water-rats when a great tide had flooded their holes and they had to kill time by swimming and running about, with their nerves all on edge, till the deluge had abated; the way the stream did not flow straight down its bed, as you might have thought, but stumbled along like a

drunken man in a walled lane, first bumping into one bank and then rebounding obliquely to cannon against the other.

How splendid his father and mother had been, not to set upon him and take away from him firmly the joy of prying into his dear river's life, and prove her a pest in a book, with a mileage and tributaries. At twelve he had not read a word of geography, only the *Æncid* with his father, and plenty of Horace, and *Télémaque* with his mother, and Hugo's *Quatre-vingt-treize*, and by himself, *Don Quixote*, in Jarvis's English, and Galland's *Arabian Nights*, Smollett, *The Newcomes*, *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *Robinson Crusoe*, read over and over again till he knew the rhythms of every part that he liked, as one knew the lines of a friend's shoulders.

This profane learning, unsicklied by any close traffic with grammar or history, an Aubrey of twelve had carried to Blackfriars, noblest of London's great day-schools. London had opened then; London was his—streets full of things to get a delighted sense of; fallen horses to be watched with agonies of compassion, but utter inability to miss the minutest detail of their resurrection; drunken men, captive or yet free; fire engines to pursue to any extremity; once an attempt at suicide—a swollen bundle of clothes floating up on the tide, and a boat making after it with the oars bending! once a corpse on the Blackfriars foreshore, stiff as a short stick and bloated beyond thought, with a policeman on guard in his pride of official insensibility. Oh, ample life!

Then the rise of the theater: first, the slow maturing of plans for a Saturday afternoon when his parents would not be at home to miss him, then the hard run at noonday from school to the two hours' fight for his place at the old Lyceum's gallery door; you fought for your place in those days. It was Irving and Terry in *Much Ado About Nothing*. How the world had swelled! On the heels of the vast emotions, with which he had perspired and shivered all that afternoon, had come the first misgiving that some parts of life were left out in the house in the river mists, where all the talk was of what the Vatican was to do next, and the terrible prices of things, and where no word seemed to have come of this game of human gaiety sparking at contact. People, he now saw, had friends to their houses; they danced; some one made music. *Much Ado About Nothing* proved that. He must learn to dance now, at his ripe age of fourteen, as Claudio and Benedick did, and other men of the world.

After some weeks of coming close up to the plunge and then shying away, the explorer of life had pushed irrevocably through a greasy baize door labeled "Bellaggio: Dancing for Stage and Drawing-room," in a small street of blighted appearance, off Drury Lane, and near Aubrey's way home, and had asked a lady with a bluish face in high impasto what it would cost to learn to dance "like other people," or, as he alternatively defined it, "enough to go to parties." A pact had ensued that imposed on Aubrey six months' daily walking or running of four extra miles, to save train fares, the bluish lady consuming the fruits of this

retrenchment, while Aubrey danced gravely for twelve separate hours among knowing youths, giggling young women, and persons who were there not wholly as devotees of the art. And all to what end? "Little idiot I was!" he could say to himself now, with kindly contempt. For he had clean forgotten, like Robinson Crusoe, to think how he should launch the craft when it was fashioned. Dance he never so featly, where should he do it? No other child had ever entered the house at Strand-on-the-Green, nor any adult friend either. The talent, new from the mint, must lodge in him useless—so he had owned to himself with apologetic candor a day or two after the twelfth lesson was over.

A sager inspiration had followed. To dance, two were needed; music, heavenly music, was cultivable by one. But what instrument? Strings, for choice: it was strings in that scene in *Much Ado About Nothing*. And, conning advertisements hard, he had perceived that the only serious stringed instrument really in question, for men of his means, was the banjo. The means—amassed during another six months—were nine shillings; frugality at the mid-day meal-time could no more. With these nine a remote Whitechapel barber had had to be faced; he had announced an old banjo at ten, but it fell to the nine after a desperate set-to, in which Aubrey, half-dead with shyness, had doggedly hung on, bringing into the field every ruse he had seen his mother practise of late at the side door in combat with hawkers.

When swords were dropped and the barber, like the

exalted spirit he was, had thrown in a sixpenny manual of the instrument, Aubrey had limped home with the spoils, covenanted and uncovenanted, making faces with exultation in shadows where no one could see. Only late on that day of triumph, when he would fain have struck his lyre, had he run right up against a second dead wall—he could not tell which note was which; he had no “ear”; he never could even tune the thing. For hours he strummed at the strings, hoping dimly that recognizable melody might emerge, and searching the book for some clue to the exit from a perplexity which must surely have vexed the novitiate of many masters. No use. At bed-time he had hidden his banjo away, for good, in a dark corner, well at the back of the loft, without internal whining; at least he had not that shame to soil or sour the fun of remembering all that foolishness now. Walking alone he had picked himself up whenever he fell and had rubbed his shins and gone on.

His shattered finances had sent him next to cheaper fields than those arts. Once he had walked to Epsom, a bare fourteen miles, stared all day, ravished above earth, at races, the ring, the booths, the welshers, three-card-men and tipsters, and stumped home at night with his legs re-entering into his body, but his mind brimming jocosely with the day's takings. For milder joys there was the National Gallery; standing for some time and thinking of nothing in presence of the big Turner beside the big Claude would induce a turbid, inarticulate solemnity and melancholy that felt luxurious; there were the docks, where the sight of

bales labeled Bagdad and Balsora produced agreeable sensations; and there were the parts of Mayfair that came into *The Newcomes*, preferably Park Lane, where he would stand on the opposite curb, consider the make of the houses, relish the forms of blinds or the dusky gleam of a picture-frame caught by the sun, and meditate possession later. Thence he would return home slowly, in measureless tranquil beatitude, his senses, well fed as they were, still able to take light refreshment *en route* from the sweet sea-like roar of the Strand. That music would turn off and on when two fingers placed on the ears were pressed down or raised up, as though on the holes of a flute, or, with both ears open, he hearkened musingly to the gentler thud of the hoofs as the 'buses slowed down to form queue through the gut, now gone, west of the island church of St. Clement's. He trailed dusty feet homewards, with no dust on his spirits; it would have been laid by the blithe way the first lamps decked the first twilight, or spirited away in some vesper rhythm of thought set going by the whole restward trail of the black-coated hosts homing for the night, looking so extraordinarily different from their morning faces and walks.

He had had a regard for these beings. Safely assured that they would not speak to him, he would pursue their possible doings out of his sight, image with regret the precipitate breakfast of one who had run for the train, or lay out, for those who seemed rich, delectable draft lives of going to races all day and plays every night. He had tracked some of them into

their various churches. He had never been brought to church, but it seemed to be one of the things that people ran after, like going to races, and so he must see to it. He had not known at first whether you paid at the door, as in theaters, or when you left at the end, as on Hammersmith Bridge, or when. So it was in some fear of ejection, he being a very apostle for destitution just then, that he penetrated to one or two shrines, apiece, of Anglicanism, Dissent, the Roman Catholics, the Jews, and the conscious, pleased Atheists. He preferred the Roman and Anglican modes, putting the Anglican first, for the lovely sound of its prayers. "Almighty God, the Father of all mercies, we, Thine unworthy servants, do give Thee most humble and hearty thanks—" To hear this was like being stroked on the hair when tired; it was not praying, but having prayers answered. Still, the Roman use had its virtues; for one, the remote, sinking hum of some parts of the Mass, like the ambrosial softening of a bumble bee's buzz as it passes out through the window into hot sunshine; that golden droning made one's own thoughts run sweetly, whatever they were; it elevated inattention to itself into absorption in other ideas, unlike the Nonconformist worship, which jolted and exacted and kept you in torment lest the man praying should not know what to say next, and be vexed.

Queer sort of being, Aubrey began to think, to offer itself to June, for her to be with, all her life. A close little animal, too. Not a word about those vast adventures had he ever said to his father or mother. He

tried to remember now; no, not one: it had not even occurred to him. During meals the parents had nearly always talked about household bills and Biblical critics. He had listened and, somehow, never asked questions. Neither had they. Unhelped and unhampered, his mind had poked and peered about, this way and that, touching things, stroking them, left alone with his own sense of the feel of them. It had seemed natural so. But why? It was odd, really; so he felt now. It was not as if he had not cared for his parents, or they for him. Affection between the three had been not, perhaps, a caress, but a clutch, silent and almost grim; the inner flame had burnt up all outward profession, it was so fierce. He thought how in his bed one night at Strand-on-the-Green he had imagined one of them dead, and remembered the pains he had taken before breakfast next day to clear from his face the stains of the night's shamefaced agonies. He had been ill the month before and his father had sat by him, so unable, for grief and fear, to play the cheerful, sick-visiting elder that Aubrey, peering at the stern face from out his blankets, had wondered whether his father was thinking of killing him—quite justly, the way the cat killed its young ones when they were sick and bothered her. “And I never saw! Little brute!”

He was sorry and yet he could not wholly regret anything. To the man newly happy in love all his old life is a chain of miracles miraculously linked. Had but one link been not what it was, he might not have ever met her. So all the links are treasures; he doats on them all; queer things that some of them looked,

perhaps, at the time, they touch him now with their dim and faithful striving, as of kind blind hands, towards the divine end that has come. Aubrey was not rent now when he saw, for the first time clearly, how his own crescent needs had made passionate misers of two generous people. The deck he walked on was empty, the ship light; elate on the sea she skimmed like a plate thrown flat over the surface of water, with preternatural-seeming buoyancy, helping thought to be buoyant. The night was beautiful with stars, and the sea only moved as the flesh does in sleep, with the lovely heave of the measure of life. He was not rent, but touched, as if by some old sad thing turned to beauty in a book. In that way he saw how his mother, at some point in talk over swollen school bills, would leap up to lower the gas by which she read Renan to his father, or would flinch away at the last moment, jibe the conductor never so rudely, from the halfpenny bus which she used to take sometimes when much tired and parcel-laden with the day's foraging. He had ruled all that shopping; his growth had taught her to feel, like yachtsmen, for each breath of favoring air that rippled the least patch of the market, swiftly diverting her custom from her old grocer, grown too grand, to the little man just setting up and straining his prices to catch business. Aubrey and no other, by kicking his toes through his boots, had shown her how little the world's rough classification of buttermen, one as dear and another as cheap, reflected the undulant diversity of truth; one, when you came to know, had fair eggs at the price, another charged

frightfully much for all but bacon, for butter you threw your money away if you did not go to a third. It was when Aubrey's plunging elbows and knees had outgrown her tailoring that she foreswore certain orders of shops altogether and bought from hawkers, whose fish and greens she would beat down at her door, steeling herself to assume a forced tactical calm while the indignant adversary withdrew, at the crisis of a bargain, almost to the garden gate, her prescient heart saying he would come back, broken, to take the penny off the plaice. What deceits she had learnt from him. Her privy share in the household washing had grown like a British Empire. Soon after the talk of Aubrey's going to Oxford began she had annexed to her sphere his father's white shirts and collars, the laundry profession's last inch of ground in the house. Not to wound Bridget the general servant's respect for her place, the prey would be hidden till Bridget's night out; the moment the garden gate clattered behind her a guilty pair flew to the scullery, one to wash, wring, dry and iron in tremulous haste; the other—half seen by Aubrey through reek as he descended with some stumper in Æschylus for solution—abetting the principal in the fraud by reading aloud the last big German on Genesis.

Possibly some potential, semi-presentient father in Aubrey helped to soften remorse in Aubrey the son. We are all young gods in our turn and accept sacrifice coolly from women and men. Perhaps it works round to something roughly just in the end, and debts can be paid, if not to those whom they were owed to. When

we, too, turn into worshipers, after our godhead has lapsed, then we too would not have the smell of our incense spoiled for the real gods, the new, young gods, by their knowing how incense has to be scraped for, sometimes. Aubrey had ceased walking; he stood in the bows, leaning over, watching the ship's stem press eagerly through the luminous water. The sound held him; it was like that of some audible motion too swift to go on, like the swish of a paper-knife quickly cutting a page. Not agonizingly, nor yet sentimentally, he wished that those two could be alive; he would have been frank with them now; he would have given away every secret of that absurd, burrowing, surmising imp that he had been; he would have liked them to know he was theirs more, not less, for this new love; and they would surely have liked the thought of him here, with the wind of the boat's speed cool on his face, as it carried him through the mild night, back to their Ireland.

Somewhere in the ship's vitals a bell struck; the engines stopped. Under the bows the cleaving sound's insistency failed by degrees; the tall new page was almost cut now. He watched till the prow scarcely rippled the water. Then he looked up, and lo, it was Ireland—lights on a pier; a lighted train waiting; behind that, a sleeping town lightless and enigmatic in morning twilight; behind that, again, all the reserve of dark hills.

CHAPTER XVI

“I have been here before,
But when or how I cannot tell:
I know the grass beyond the door,
The sweet, keen smell,
The sighing sound, the lights around the shore.”
D. G. ROSSETTI.

IN Aubrey's first letter June read:—"I had a new joy when I landed. Every one talked in the way I should have done if I had been in the place of him. Porters and beggars and newspaper boys—they were all I, put to those jobs. It's a strange place—I know it better than any I ever was in. It isn't the brogue; it's the way their minds catch a thing when it's thrown them—the gesture, its naturalness. So it's like coming home; at home no one is odd.

"This hotel is the one that priests stay at; scarcely a tweed coat at breakfast. The priests seem most natural, to me, of all. Perhaps it's because they're what English parsons are trying to be, only the parsons can't quite get it out, and so the priests are more like them than they are themselves, as good portraits are. The way the priests argue, the way they quote Horace, the way they talk about their bishops, the way they're nice to the heathen, and yet he's a heathen—it's all part of something I seem to know as I never knew England nor anything there, except you.

"All day I have been clinging to side-cars, going about to see people, show my first credentials, and get others, and all that. I called on the great prelate—I had a letter to him—and his welcome matched everything else; a courtly prince of your Church, and yet I was mystically prepared for the thing he'd say next. 'You're an Irishman too?' he asked, towards the end. I had felt it coming. 'The County Monaghan, is it?' As if I could tell! My father never seemed to have time to talk of things here. But I recollected just then, by good luck, how my mother had let it out once that a Cardinal Doran had been some remote cousin. I couldn't forbear; I played my cardinal, proudly. I think it did good. The Archbishop looked quite intrigued, and his chaplain, who'd hovered about all this time, pulled up dead for a second as soon as I put my trump down. No doubt it was just polite show of interest—all the questions they asked after that. They all have manners, your clergy. I told all I could, by way of acknowledging it.

"The Chaplain has come round this evening. They're wonderful. He had a plan, all made up, to save me trouble by passing me on from one parish priest to another, all through the whole West. I'm starting to-morrow. I shall be like a bucket used at Maynooth to put out a fire. There—see how I can babble about the things that don't matter, and nothing about the only great thing. I've tried, and given up.

" 'Dumbed by aiming utterance great,
Up to the miracle of my fate.'

“I have a great fear, too, of saying some things the wrong way—lest the pain come up in your face, and I not there to tell you the way I'd meant it.”

The first time that June read the letter she felt she must have missed the chief part of it out. After the fifth or sixth reading she knew that what she had missed was not there; it was only a letter, and not he. She had furtively hoped that, each time he wrote, it would be, while she read, as if he were back; she would be as she was when beside him she looked along the line of his sight and bent up, for her own use and delight, his communicable strength. No hope of that, she saw, now; he was really gone; parted was parted; letters would only animate thoughts of that miracle; they would not do it.

She scanned the letter first in her room, in a hurry, half afraid of it, glancing over the pages of unread words as if they were the upturned faces of a crowd that might do to her she knew not what. Then it was all read through in the garden among the crumbling hollyhocks, and again on the caked field-path through stubble as June walked to the village, and then, many times, in the afternoon, in the secure solitude of the Hurtwood pines, her horse standing wondering what the delay was and bending round looks of mild chiding at her long motionlessness. The gentleness of his remonstrances touched her at last; she put the letter away, patted his neck and apologized; now they would have a good gallop. She needed it; she had grown chilly before she looked up. She looked round; everywhere

brownness and fall, an ebb and a closing in. She had exulted in it only yesterday; youth always does, when its own flame is undamped; morning and spring in the blood delight in their own effortless victory over whatever it is that casts down the ageing year. But, just now, a frightening thought blew up like a cloud, she could not tell whence, and traversed her sky—that her spirit had no valiant heat of its own at all, no high, unborrowed will to live greatly; that she was like water; it could be heated, but not heat itself; as soon as you took it away from the fire, ardor began to die out of it; so might hers, too, cool away to nothing in that cold, extinguished moon-world of her father's and Guy's. She wrote that night to Aubrey, among other things:

“Do go on loving me. You are cheated, I know; if you could see me, even for one glimpse, just as I am, you'd leave me. You couldn't not do it. You'd have to say, ‘Fool that I've been!’ I hate to cheat you, and yet I'm in fear, much more dreadful, lest you get back your sight and just go.

“How tiny that Irish world is! *My* mother was some most remote kinswoman of Cardinal Doran's too. I'll work it out some day; I'll write to my Aunt Kate—she is a nun at Rathfarnham. She knows all family history; she'll help.

“The days are short now; the heather under the mill was shiny with dew this afternoon although it was sunny. Do love me very much—find some way of

loving me so that you *would* go on though you found me out utterly."

Aubrey wrote next from Banturk, from a priest's house:—

"I'm right on the edge of the world of trains, shops and inns. From here you look out westward, over the verge, and across wet hills, to where Cusheen must be. Down with these endless wet hills; they're too like the sea, with the sun setting beyond it, when you're alone. I shiver a little; I want you here to draw close to.

"It isn't a merry journey from Dublin. Things appeared which I hadn't thought of; and yet, when I saw them, I knew them and felt half ashamed of having been caught forgetting. I came by a night train to Croom and woke in the bad light before dawn, the chilled gray, like mist and ashes and fainting faces and lead. There were crows standing still on the palings of stations we passed; they watched the train in and out; nobody noticed them. Nobody got in or out, except two policemen with guns. As the light grew I saw there were skeletons of villages lying about in the fields, bones of old houses and churches, half out of sight under nettles; ivy was sprawling on them.

"I changed to a slower train at Croom and a slower still at Kanteer. We reached Banturk before eight, but the priest was waiting. The way they all befriend me makes me ashamed; when the next thing to do is not certain, a good black-coated genie springs up and

directs. We walked up a slope to his house. At the top I looked round and the train was some way off already, scuttling back to the East with quick, aghast little puffs, like a beast that had taken fright at the place.

"The priest, Father O'Keel, has his reserve; perhaps I seem English. Banturk was 'disturbed,' he says, a few years ago. He took me a walk after breakfast; he'd point to a cabin; 'the man of the house,' he'd say, 'there, was convicted thrice'; or another had served ten months; or 'When I was in Croom jail myself I'd see a good third of my people below in the yard, at their exercise.' He described it aggressively, almost, and unconfidentially. Poor man, he must have thought me an Austrian. I told him what a full-blooded Venetian I am. He did not quite warm, even then—he only became more urbanely guarded.

"The potatoes are bad even here—'not fit to offer a goose, let alone a clean pig,' a man said. The soil is famished; the bald slopes rise and fall, mile beyond mile, treeless, featureless; rain soaking into them week after week; the wind blows it into the cabins. 'Will that not content you?' Father O'Keel asked me. 'Two hundred souls in it, and fifty policemen; pig's food, and that only, to eat for the winter; and next week, or the week after that, the sheriff's men coming to drive off any stock that's not starved on them already. Will nothing do for you at all but Cusheen itself?' He had a dour ruth in his voice, as if it were I that was going to be hurt. They're all kind here, but it's shiversome. Keep close, comrade; let's keep all the lights up in our hearts and the fire roaring."

June read it with a new glow. He had been shaken by something; that grieved her. The way he wrote made her see how his face would look if it were haggard; it hurt her to think of him so. But he had called out to her—it was the first time—as if she could help in some need, and pain was lost in that joy, as a mother's is when she first wakes in the night to a bitter little cry for her ministration to some small necessity. Then she scolded herself, as her way was. Had she not wanted him strong? Had she not felt only two days before that all her own strength was the overflow of a few drops from the full vessel of his? That was true, but so was the other; she craved his strength, but also his weakness. Let the discord resolve itself how it could, she would not shrink from it; she would exult in the two clashing notes.

She walked about the lanes for hours that day, trying to stow away into a tranquil place in her treasury of gladnesses the uncontrollable ecstasy of that discovery. It took long. That day was her richest, she half knew that no more treasure could come; she had climbed to the top-gallant of joy. As she came home the moment's perfectness almost weighed on her; the world seemed ripe; it hung finished, lustrous, its great time reached. A presentient light came; she saw that, ten years after, if she should walk in these lanes, she might feel "how that oak has failed now," or think, perhaps, that some young ash was a scraggy, poor thing as yet, or wonder for what strolling lovers some overblown flower had decked a great day. But not now. Nothing was past its true prime now, or before

it; everything had lived only to be as it was then; even the things gone to seed by the way could hardly have their hearts in the past, or the very young things be pushing towards to-morrow. People, too, of many ages and kinds, all stood at the delicious crisis of their lives; for this they had lived, old women with seamed and drawn faces to be the perfected paintings of patience and waiting that they were now, and boys to be running wild with their heels flinging up, for figures of youth. The world stood up perfect, with no old transports of joy to ache back at, nor far-off ends for desire to live in; she stood as though at the middle of a wheel, with all things and times and people running in on it like spokes, bent on it and centering at it.

But the note of ecstasy, like that of agony, will not be held. You may climb from peak to peak of joy, but the way between them must dip. June was down from the heights and out of the glow when the next letter came—from Cusheen at last.

“I have crossed the moor to Cusheen. Such a moor! I don't know how wide—leagues and leagues; the only moor in the world; ‘a heath,’ ‘a blasted heath’—Shakespeare dreamt it, the time his mind was just on the brink. We drove for five hours and saw no one; not a goat, even. There was a wind; the grass by the road whistled loud enough for a while, then it dropped to a whine, and then thinned right away into odd wisps of whimpering. Then it stopped quite—not the wind; it must have been the grass that

stopped; it starved by the road till the wind had none left to play on. Then we came to Cusheen.

"Cusheen is not made of earth, like other places that people live in. It's stone—one rumpled sheet of it; some drift dirt in the wrinkles, of course, but the rest just naked; it streamed and shone with rain, like wet slates in moonlight. That's all I've seen yet. The few hours I've been here the Father has not let me out of his sight. He seems to fear I might be knocked down by the sight of his parish unless he were there to interpret God's ways. He's always with me—no, always a little way off; they all are; I'm coming to feel like a child that has found its way into a wood full of gnomes of some kind that won't come out and parley, but peep and draw back and watch from behind trunks of trees and whisper together and pass him on deeper into the wood; it always opens a little in front and closes in behind me. I avow it, I'm solitary, with this cordon all round, wherever I move, and all with the one manner—civil and helpful and that, but oh, their paralyzing tact! It's as if I were going to be hanged and they might have to hold me down yet. I'm not of the fold, of course; that must be it.

"You see, I tell all, without shame; if I shiver you hear the teeth chatter. Still, it *is* all, I think. I'll say, after to-morrow. On into the wood to-morrow."

No letter came next day, or the next. Through those two days June thought she was standing it well; too well?—she asked herself once or twice, chidingly; had she grown hard? At the end of the second day

panic broke with a rush through the wall on which she had mounted guard with the staunchness that she had taken for want of heart. The thing came in the dark; she had put out her light, she was going resolutely to sleep, when suddenly the darkness changed; it ceased to be innocent; first an infinitesimal buzz was abroad, the beat of a droning hot pulse; and then the beleaguering terror ran in on her—it came from all round, it was like a multitude, it was everywhere, as if the whole air were cellular and every cell of it a fear for Aubrey, all of them pressing in at the beset brain to possess it.

She must have slept at moments after that, for some of the night's train of torments were dream, mostly the fleet portrait-dreams that stab lovers and friends; not illusions of action, with time passing, but fugitive visions of something itself immobile or arrested, as if she saw, through shifting breaks in a mist, one or another poignant set look on the most dear face. At times she saw him appealingly small, a child rendingly alone with some trouble or frustrate plan. When she awoke from that, fear itself had to wait while love grew into twice itself by musing on all that she had lost of him, the years before they met, when he must have had a child's sky-darkening griefs and a boy's dumbly-swallowed humiliations, and she not there. Other dreams, too; one, monochromatic with dust, of an end to the world; every one else in this dream was dead; they had not loved enough; only Aubrey and she were alive, and he ill in a dim cell of a room underground, out of a tunneled corridor; she tended him,

keeping his heart up, until, going out about some of his needs, she returned to see the earth wall of the room crumbling loose, and then the bed-clothes slipping away into shapelessness too, like loose sand. "Yes, of course, they were spun out of dust, they couldn't cohere," she was hurriedly telling herself in the dream, and then saw that his hand, where it lay out on the sheet, was trickling away into dust too; its dust and the dust of the sheet streamed over the edge of the bed together and made one heap on the floor; then she looked for his face and awoke and lay panting with the scream still stuck in her throat. And then it all came again in another form, and then another.

She told him only the last of these, before the light of release. Night throbbled through at length; as soon as one bird piped it seemed fair to say, "I have fought it through now," and to go to her eastern window to wait for the sun, to make sure of the sun. There was a little table there, with a candle on it and things for writing. She wrote while she waited:—"I have awaked from a freakish half-dream—that you were at sea, or out on a wild heath, I couldn't tell which, and a storm was coming. I heard it pass my window on its way to you; all the garden rustled and the poplars must have shuddered white, I thought—a light was thrown up on the ceiling, but I couldn't warn you, for some reason, and then the rushing thing was gone past and the dead leaves danced behind it like bits of paper after a train; I was too late, it would reach you before I could; I couldn't warn you. How good to wake and look out into the garden! Ancient, immovable stillness out

there—nothing had stirred except in my crazy nightmare. It was all right. The light in the east was just beginning to draw the poplars in black, with an edge like black lace, flat on a sky like a sheet, pearly blue—”

She wrote “was” and not “is”; her letter must come as word of a little mischance wholly over, not as a cry out of distress. Love may fear all things, in secret, but hope of all things must ring in its voice. So she resolved, but day lingered; could she be even sure that the candle was paling? Remember, the blood was low—she had hardly slept, and it had been autumn’s first frost; up from her bare feet to the knees the cold numbed her, it deadened her fingers past writing. That undid her again; for the writing had helped; stoutly to seem to be of good heart is almost to be of it. Losing the pen she lost hold of herself; the leagued agues of the shuddering flesh and of terrified tenderness shook her with paroxysms not to be mastered at first, only kept from convulsive wailing by dropping down on her knees to kill down thought, to head it off, instant by instant, with set mechanic exercises of prayer.

“I prayed for you to Mary, Mother of God,” she wrote on, when she could. That much, perhaps, she would not hide. And then day came; the undiscouraged miracle of morning broke over downs of diamonded gray. Friendly and faithful flame! Surely no rocket answering a spent ship’s burning cry could ever have burst a ball of kinder fire against the domed ceiling of night.

CHAPTER XVII

"Some veil did fall—I knew it all of yore."

D. G. ROSSETTI.

IT rained itself out in the night after Aubrey last wrote. By dawn the clouds had lifted enough to form a flat awning; the eye saw uncannily far in the stratum of clean-washed air between that dark roof and the ground.

"A grand day for a view," said the priest, after breakfast; "you'd like to step up to a place that I have in my mind—not above a few perches from here. You'll see every acre that's in it." He fingered his hat nervously, though the words had been cold. A cold nervousness had been freezing their talk over breakfast into a few brittle, impotent icicle-stumps of polite conversation.

Inland the awning of cloud was impaled on a black mountain. They walked a mile towards its foot, with a civil fuss about who should go first at each stile. Then Power turned. "Will you look now?" he said.

Aubrey did. As he turned, moor, mountain and sea composed themselves into a unity, seemed to have modeled themselves, like a clay that was its own sculptor, into the image of—what was it? "Why, it's like—" Aubrey stared at the effigy.

"Yes?" The priest waited.

"Like a bird's foot wading into the sea."

"Yes," said the priest, with a smile of wintry patience, as if one more child had done an old sum. Aubrey thought he could see all the times that Power had come to this spot to show English strangers his cure of stone and brine and to watch straw fires of pity flare up for the moment in their eyes and voices. "You're struck with the way the shank of the leg comes down out of the clouds? And the size of the bird you'd imagine above? Did you ever see claws the equals of those? Or a match for the venomous clench they have, into the bottom of the sea?"

Aubrey was looking. The seaward foot of the mountain, Mulvrack, spread into five spined, convex promontories, high and knuckle-like. Their aquiline ends struck downwards into the silently tumbling whiteness of distant waves, and between each of these claws and the next was a webbing of lower land, half submerged, its seaward end a fiord. To the side of one of the rocky talons, a little below where the two watchers stood, but high above the sea, there adhered a huddle of pigmy haystacks.

"I've lost the village," said Aubrey.

"Didn't you take it for haystacks, now?"—Power made some poor joke—"hard to find needles, ay, or whole cabins, in haystacks." He must have made it before; his smile was a faded one.

Aubrey stared across with unreconciled eyes at the kraal of mud huts, not even whitewashed; dirt-colored, pendent, they seemed, from here, to stick like swallows' mud nests to a wall. "But there are no people!" he said.

The priest pointed a great way down to the shore. "You see the specks stirring below there? Half out of the water?"

"Men?" Aubrey asked, with his eyes on them.

"Ay, and women; scraping the sea-weed off from the rocks. Look, now." Aubrey's eye followed the priest's pointing finger. Up from the little group of amphibians a dotted line of other specks, all in motion, ascended crookedly to a high place inland, just under the awning of cloud, where the naked stone of the mountain began to glisten with wet.

"Women, the climbing dots are," said the priest; "they take the weed up on their heads. Then it's laid on the slabs you see shining there."

"Why?"

"Ach, a seed'll strike root in it, all in good time."

Aubrey was puzzled; a little hurt too. He thought: "The man brought me out here to see how bad things were. Now he makes light of them."

"There's an advantage," Power pursued. "When there's a frost on the peak there, and then sun in the morning, you'd see the rock come rattling down from above till it's ground into shale, ay, and that into sand, almost, to mix with the weed, the way it would soon nourish potatoes." He seemed to be arguing now; and that not with Aubrey either, but with some one standing beside or behind him. Power's look, too, went that way—past Aubrey's shoulder, as though he stood impeding the priest's view of some more taking figure or scene, of the mind's making.

Aubrey groped for a clue; dim work for a conscious

heathen; still, it absorbed and excited; it turned him for the moment into a being of faculties happy in exercise, gleefully nosing at new trails, because they are trails, as a healthy dog does. He marveled; so the priest could go into trance; the priest was the real thing; he had the stare of the true visionary whose soul is holding out to the last the high-pitched note of some difficult beatitude. Could he be seeing, up there where the rocks sent down from above came to rest, and the weeds brought up from below were laid, his God and his own race mystically leagued to broaden the life-bearing earth? Rare, glorious illusion, good to think about. Aubrey admiringly left him possessed until any more silence might seem like comment. "Could they not fish?" he asked, to set their tongues moving.

"Is it fish?" The Father looked at him sharply. "Fish, on a coast the like of that?" A gesture almost extravagant called to witness all the visible miles of indented, harborless stone on which the rollers of the Atlantic were breaking.

"Is that not a breakwater?" Aubrey had fancied he saw a low, ruler-drawn line that ran out from the end of one of the claws set down into the sea, till it almost met the tip of another, enclosing a tiny space with no white fret in it.

"Not a boat is there in it," said Power, as if he were contradicting a slander. "They did make an offer, a long time back, at fishing of some description. Many were drowned at it, one way and another. You'd hear of their bodies found floating away in the North, dear

knows how far. How in the world would a curagh* find the way in at a hole like the door of a house in the dark night?" He spoke agitatedly, pressing his case without any need that Aubrey could see, and then abruptly dropping it. "Step with me this way a minute," he said, and led the way, first uphill and then to the right—the South, as the country priest called it. In this way they crossed from the ridge of the upper tendon of one of those stone claws to that of the next, so that a new hollow came into sight beyond the new ridge; and, looking into the new hollow, Aubrey saw a color he had not seen since Banturk. Between the white breakers below and the faded velveteen brown of the mountain moor above there stretched a huge meadow of grass. It was luscious; his eye loved the good green; how it must wave in summer, he thought, when gusts blew in from the west and printed on it in fugitive shadings the scud of their fan-shaped pressure!

Power was eyeing him. "Now, isn't that the good land?" he asked, when Aubrey could take his eyes from it. "Not a century back it was stone, as naked as where they're working above. Their grandparents made it the fat earth it is. They were put out of it when it was done; they had to do it again, higher up, and again higher up, and their children's children are at it to-day."

"It's beastly," said Aubrey, flushing, the wrong was so vivid. He had not known of such things.

The priest did not concur and did not dissent. He

*A curagh is a rude boat made of canvas stretched over a framework of wood.

only went on. "Three pounds an acre they pay Mr. Newman for letting them turn his rock into pasture, for him to lease to a big grazier at Croom; that and a half-crown apiece for leave to take the weed from his ocean to do it with. If it should go on a thousand years more there'll be cows to the tip of Mulvrack, and not a tittle left of Cusheen but a few stones in the nettles. Isn't it natural? How would the honey be got and nobody smoking the bees out that made it?"

Aubrey was glad of the irony. It was of this world; it seemed to exhale from good human passions, sane anger and scorn, homely and sound-seeming moods after that other remote, warped mood of mystic acquiescence in things cruel and foul. And then, in a moment, the satisfaction was gone; the priest's look had seemed to dismiss his own sarcasm; it had been nothing to him, or only a means to keep Aubrey off, to hold him in play outside, to amuse him, after his kind, with trifles, while others unwound behind closed doors the innermost coils of ecstasy. Aubrey, the black-balled, the sentenced waiter in ante-rooms, tried to muster a civil, cheerful defiance; he braced himself to abide, in this rarefied air, by his vulgar judgments. "It's beastly," he said, "beyond words."

The priest looked him over. Aubrey's eyes were away on the fenced Eden of emerald; still, he felt the look through his skin, and what the look meant, as he imagined—that he was a decent heathen, and that, in a beast which must go on its belly all the days of its life, it was something to have even the wish to put some things right on the earth.

“There’s a beauty about it, too,” Power said, in a tone of secure, proud understatement, as he might have told a child, who could pick out an A, that there are fine things in books. He looked Aubrey over again, as if seeking some point on his person at which the right arrow, if one could find it, might penetrate. “Would you believe it,” he said, “that in this and five parishes round there was never heard of a girl that went wrong nor a theft but once only?” Then he gave up, as if he had suddenly seen or just remembered that it was of no use. “Not but we’re beggars,” he broke off with a little laugh of rather savage humility. “Beggars we are and taking your help at this minute.”

Aubrey could almost have fancied there was a faint stress on the “your.” “Taken for English again!” he thought. To lighten the talk he told eagerly how he was Irish; he rummaged his mind for the few odd shreds his father had told him about early days—about the famine and cholera, most of them—how on a country ride his horse would shy at a body here and a body there, of those who had died on the road.

Queer man the priest was! He showed, with perfect civility, no trace of interest. He could not have cared less if this sort of thing happened daily and every one from England turned Irish on his hands. He almost snatched, in fact, at another subject, forcing it into connection by hurriedly taking up Aubrey’s last word. “A road beyond there—you came by it last night—was made in the Famine;” and then Power checked, with a bitten lip, as if it were not what he would have said if he had waited.

They were walking already across rises and dips in the shabby brown gloss of the moor, towards the raw end of the road. It stopped a mile from Cusheen as if its desire to get there had suddenly failed. From the cut end of this artery any traffic that coursed it so far had to spurt out on the open moor; thence the road only pointed the way to its aim. From where the last macadam lay, the two looked up the road inland; it rose for a furlong or two, to a clear sky-line, and there, drawn large and dark on the sky, was a singular sight—a man descending swiftly on Cusheen, not on the road, but beside it, in the rough of the moor, making huge strides from tussock to tussock of boggy grass and leaping springily across the drain trenches.

Power named him almost before Aubrey saw that he was of middle-age, large-boned and fine-drawn with hard work and spare feeding. "Horgan, a harvester, back out of England."

The home-comer had to be greeted. "You're having grand exercise, Horgan."

"I am that, your reverence. The drains on the shoulder above there are the width of the world. And the number! Three miles or four have I walked in standin' leps, out of twenty that's in it from Croom."

"And what in the wide world is wrong with the road?" Aubrey heard his own voice trail an answering rhythm, as if it had picked up a tune it had liked once and forgotten afterwards.

Horgan looked to the priest; he seemed to implore extrication. The priest gave no help; he looked troubled himself.

"Whethen," Horgan spluttered it out, "we med up our minds, the whole four of us, three and twenty years back, that we'd not put a fut to it—Francy Joyce, an' Kilfoyle, an' Michael M'Gurk an' meself. God rest the souls of the three of them; an', while I'll last, please God, I'll keep off it enough for the set of us."

"Ah, you're a foolish fellow," the priest chid, without harshness, as if a child had made itself ill with some mad labor of love.

"Well, I'll be leggin' it home. From this out there's no bother about it," said Horgan, eyeing with approbation the roadless mile of bog that remained.

"Why was it?" asked Aubrey when Horgan was gone.

For a moment the priest seemed to be choosing between words. The ones he chose were, "That man was a cholera baby."

Odd phrase!—and yet Aubrey knew it. Nothing is lost from memory—only stored out of the way, and the key of the drawer mislaid for a while. The key turned in the lock. "I've heard about cholera babies," he said, surprised that he could say it.

"You have?"

"Some one or other told me. He'd been to a cholera hospital—some sort of barn, a fitted-up thing—and two nurses were at a back door shaking the bodies of dead babies out of their night-shirts on to a heap of other small bodies they'd done with. The new bodies slipped about on the heaped ones."

"Horgan was treated so."

"Thrown out for dead?"

"He was that. He was born in the Famine. They went for the rent and found the father and mother dead on the floor, and she with her mouth full of grass she'd been chewing, the way she might have milk for the child. I've heard the child was past crying; nothing he'd do but keep his mouth open and move his head this way and that, like a young bird starving. They took it for cholera. So away he was brought and put to bed in the cholera barns till the head of him ceased moving, and then I'll engage they were in a hurry, with this and with that, and there'd be another child to put into the night-shirt."

"And then?" The priest was too much, with his labored coldness of tone. Aubrey was modern enough; anti-sentimentalism was good in his eyes, but not this stony cataloguing of horrors. It was not honest callousness—that he was sure of; nor yet a fair overture, such as some men make when moved, for a compact of understatement; it was a blind, a fence, another implement of exclusion. And why? Aubrey chafed. Need one be thought a petrified brute for not being a Catholic?

"Some one was passing that thought there was life in the child and took it home, wrapped it up warmly and gave it nourishment—not a thing else did it need." The priest's voice was slow and frozen; each word, as it dripped, was like a drop added on to an icicle.

Still, Aubrey felt better now. He had a warming sense of the deep, plain satisfactoriness of that other man, who had eyes and a working pity and knew what to do. "That was the kind of man to have passing,"

he grunted, trying to keep a firm lip. He added, in thought, "And not a priest, or a Levite."

"He was the man," Power said with a gulp, "who made the road at your feet."

"Made it?"

"Made it be made. A Famine relief work. He gave them no rest in Dublin till they'd set about it."

"Yet Horgan won't use it?"

"You've seen."

"Although that man made it?"

"No, but because he did."

Aubrey stared blankly. It was not lifelike, all this sailing dead against strong head winds of natural motive; it all belonged to the theater, or to old novels; people in Victor Hugo, people who only existed to cap a surprise or bring down a curtain, might be like that.

The priest watched him. "Ach, don't I know," he said, "that it's foolishness! 'To the Greeks, foolishness.' Still—" He stopped. His gesture was one of despair of prevailing over a natural darkness like night. It was as if he said, "There was I going to talk about colors, and quite forgot you were born blind." Then his courtesy came back in a compunctious abundance. "You'd like to get on?" he asked gently.

They left the amputated end of the road. The *Northerner's* correspondent was plunged for the rest of that morning in economic researches. They were a joy and relief. If you just did them hard, something came. It was like rowing a boat. And if something good came it would seem good to Mullivant.

That was dead sure. There *was* still a world where effect followed cause and the better was always preferred to the worse. As Aubrey went on with his work he felt a hankering love for plain bread and thick wool and stout timber. In the back of his mind he made lists of such things, and of people like them, plain people of whole-meal good sense and fleecy geniality and oaken staunchness. Commonplace thoughts for a "brilliant" young author; but he was in a queer place and was not sure that its queerness was not invading him; so he felt his way back to take hold of things that any one can be sure of.

CHAPTER XVIII

"It's that queer, what people will do for religion."

From the Hedge Schoolmaster's Lucretius.

AT the mid-day meal the cold was intense in their talk. To Aubrey the priest's house had grown horrible. Everywhere oil-cloth and oleographs of saints and trashy stained glass in acrid blues and ferocious or sugary reds; it worked like a morgue on Aubrey; it gave him cramp in the jaws; the polite words had to be ground out singly.

Still, he could get away soon to his room, to write, to transfer to the *Northerner's* readers the blow that Cusheen gave to the eye. He went at it hard and it did him good; it reassured him that there was still work on which the will could put itself forth as the fist does in punching a fixed ball, secure of an unevasive resistance. The poor devils here were cut off as though at the top of a burning house; the Brabburn people had ladders; the thing was, to let them know. As he wrote, the job bared itself down, in his sight, to a quest of clear loudness and speed in a call for rescue. Such work, while in hand, makes all things simple and turns many courses to one. At least it arrests or suspends perplexity and misgivings. There was June—their way on together ran up into mists, as if it were up Mulvrack; well, wherever it went, they might hold together not the less tightly for his having got this

thing done. There was the priest, with his frigid signaling to a fellow across estranging deeps; it hurt to be on such terms with any one; still, the priest was a saint, surely enough, and a saint must have got hold of rightness, whatever queer end he gripped of it; then, whatever was right must somehow be all of a piece; its bits must fit in together at last, like a puzzle map, to make up one whole, though they looked hard to assort, certainly. So, if this thing were worth doing, at least he could stand no worse with Power for putting it through.

He had heard that the post went at sunset. The letter-box was below, Power said, as he gave Aubrey tea some three hours later. It stood in the village "square." "Will you give me your letters to post?" Power asked. "I'd as lief walk one way as the other."

No; Aubrey would have no marble pillars of churches mobilizing themselves to run with his letters. He said he wanted some air and a smell of the sea. The priest said he would show him the way.

Aubrey's spirits were up, with the craftsman's heat still aglow in his head. Was his host really free? he asked eagerly. Yes. Would it tire the Father if they went down to the shore now, instead of to-morrow, to see the weed-gathering?

"Ach, is it tire?" Aubrey liked the sound-limbed priest's disdain of the idea. Power looked at his watch. There was an hour till dark. Work would be ceasing, but two or three of the creatures would be at it yet; John Devine certainly, while he could see; John

was queer in the head, and never any great hand at the work, and must stick to it longer before he'd have as much done as another. Power talked on about this John diffusely, as if perhaps he wanted to think about something else and must run up a screen of words behind which to do it.

The thin final segment of the sun was dropping beyond the high wall of fore-shortened sea when they left the house; before they had gone the three hundred yards to the Cusheen cabins the last ray was gone, the wall of sea was cold black, fretted with cold white, and the wind, which had never stopped, went whimpering about like a starved thing in the clear, colorless light. Fugitive, apprehensive and cruel, in that light, if in any, you might think that malice herself was abroad; it makes children inpish. As Power and Aubrey came into the "square" at one end—it was no square, only a small space, a triangular ganglion made by the meeting of three rough tracks, with hovels about it—two urchins of nine or ten were confessing the influence of the hour. The hour itself was told at the middle point of the "square," on a public clock at the top of a small, neat column, an odd sight in a west coast village. Suddenly one boy, possessed by peremptory inspiration, picked up a handful of mud and flung it, with the address of a marksman, full in the white face of the clock. For a moment he mused on the success of this defilement, before communicating it to his friend.

"Jemmy," he said, "I'm just after throwin' a gran' slam of mud at th' ould divil's clock."

Jemmy reviewed the good work benignly. "Th' ould divil!" he said with assenting aversion. Both picked up more mud.

"Be off out of that," the priest called. They fled to earth somewhere between the cabins, with rabbit promptitude, but their voices were faintly heard contumaciously chanting far off, "We'll hang ould —— on a sour apple-tree." "Ould"—what? What was the name? Aubrey could not quite catch it where it recurred in this litany of derision, and yet he thought he had caught it the first time, and yet he could not say now what it was that he thought he had caught, so elvish, at times, are sense and recollection as well as boys.

Father Power looked vexed; he walked faster, silently, down towards the sea. The ground became broken; it kept Aubrey's eyes on his feet for some minutes. When he looked up the straight line he had seen from above, ruled on the sea as though on paper, was close below—a little stone pier, rude but sufficient, holding a snug, minute haven. Not a craft was there in it of any kind.

Aubrey turned to the Father, wondering. At the pier's head a beacon was blinking into brightness, kind and jocund in the first twilight, but strangely idle above that boatless sea. Along the pier a man was walking landward; he must have lit the lamp.

"It was not the want of a light, then—?" Aubrey began. The priest could not have lied that morning. There must be some honest clue to this riddle. Aubrey was sure the priest had not lied.

Power opened his hands, as one throws up a game. "I deceived you," he said; "I tried to."

"Why?"

"I'm not flint." He gave Aubrey a new look of remote and melancholy kindness. It lasted some seconds, as though it might stay there till more were said. Then it wavered and fell off; a gap seemed to break in the straight line of a purpose. Still, he went on as if through each stage of that mustering and flagging of a resolve Aubrey's thought must have kept step with his and would be where it stood when it found speech again. "When he saw the rate they were drowned, at the fishing, he sold a farm that he had at Kilmurry and hired a party of masons and smiths from the town and went out with them daily. Great work they had at the start with the rock that the light is on, and it only bare of the sea for one hour or two in the twelve."

"The breakwater, too—that man made it?" Aubrey glanced up to where, high on the moor, the contemned road ran white to its abrupt end.

"Ay did he, of strong stone. It'll last till there's nothing but cows to look at it here, coughing out in the fields that Cusheen'll be then—they or the one man that's paid to be minding the lamp and keeping the clock beyond at it for ever."

"He saw to that, too?"

"Ay, in his will. There's no end to it."

Aubrey digested it, looking about him. Behind them six struck on the clock that had undergone the lustral pollution—a tinkling chime, rather melodious;

it sounded innocent. Things were all in a tale. "So that put an end to their fishing?" he said, not needing to be told.

"I don't say they're wise," Power said. "I've told them they're fools. But they're holy." He spoke as a parent might of a daughter who starved to keep chaste. "Ah, then, aren't there terms," he broke out, as though entreating Aubrey, for pity's sake, to see through the dark, "on which you'd be offered good things and have every right in the world to accept them, and yet—" He made again that gesture of giving it up.

Aubrey thought, "My paganism again? Darkness is darkness—that's what he means, I suppose." "He did it on terms, then?" he said.

"Not at the time. The terms came of what he did after. Ah, wouldn't a man—" Power plunged off again, giving himself to another quick gust of invited passion, as if he must speak so, or not get words at all—"wouldn't a man that had had an old coat, or a new one itself, for a present from Judas throw it away, and he stiff with the cold, the time he heard who had sold the Lord God?"

"Isn't Judas set free for an hour, each Christmas, for having given a leper a coat?"

"Ay, but how're we to know the leper didn't perish of cold in the end liefer than make use of it after?"

Aubrey considered. He then said: "You say God was betrayed in Cusheen?"

Power paused. The gust had sunk that had lifted him. He spoke now as if in compunction, saying no

more than he must. "He was parish priest here for eight years. See the place that it is. Wouldn't he be entitled to feel he was trusted by God almost out of His sight? And to break his vows then! And the poor woman!"

Aubrey's thoughts ran on the faster. Things rushed to connect themselves, headlong. This was what June had on her mind, here was the faith that did miracles, the lives not to be taken as gifts from an apostate, the wrong done to these people by that pair of whom one shamed her by being of her blood. He thought it out, first to himself for some way, and then, where the roads of conjecture forked, out aloud. "He was akin to Miss Hathersage?"

"*He* was not," Power answered.

"He married her kinswoman?"

"No priest could marry."

"At law, I mean?"

"God marries; not law. Would He sanction a perjury?"

"Still—at law?"

Power shrugged. "Does it matter?"

"To them, perhaps, not. But, say they had a child?"

The priest was distressed; Aubrey could see it. He thought Power looked like a woman affronted by some loose speech, and he was sorry. "I understand," he conceded hurriedly, "it would be, anyhow, only a child, in your eyes, of illicit love?"

"Ay, and worse."

"Of adultery?"

"Worse than that."

"Incest?"

"Ay. Do you think any woman could go to confession and she not able to speak to the priest the way a motherless girl would speak to her father at home?"

"Is that how all Catholics think?—the Hathersages, for instance?"

"Think? Of the son?"

Oh, there was a child, then, Aubrey mused, still piecing away in his mind.

The priest went on, picking words as with effort: "They're proud, and they're pious?"

"What! Guy?" Aubrey's mind, working within at its inferences, came out for an instant to smile at the door.

"Guy is a good practical Catholic. So is his father. The women are that and more to it. The mother had one other sister and"—so it was June's maternal aunt that married this priest who broke free; Aubrey caught it up swiftly—"the poor girl was taking her vows at the time, at Rathfarnham; the shame almost killed her. Mrs. Hathersage never could rest till she died, for wanting to make it up to the creatures here for the loss they were at by their piety. Now it's the same with the girl. Not one of them all could have lived but for hoping that all these years would fade out the mark of dirt they had on them all. God knows what they'd do if it ever came back on what's left of them."

"How could it?" Aubrey asked idly. His thought was more practical. What a non-Catholic *he* was!

And, if this were true, that the priest was saying, what a Catholic June! There were hazards before them. But hazards are challenges, opportunities; so they are good. He felt strong and secure.

The priest was replying: "The world's not so large. God knows how soon any person at all might meet with another."

Really the man was fantastic, poor zealot, thought Aubrey. "Well, there are pretty good odds against it," Aubrey said cheerfully.

"Mind now," said Power; "it's slippery work on these stones." They were down within reach of the flying spray now; they walked over rounded rocks slimy with weed. "Where at all is Devine?" said the priest. On the way they had met other sheep of his flock, gaunt and blue with long wading, and now trailing dead feet uphill. "Not a one is left at it but he."

He knows each one, as if they were not sheep merely, but cows, Aubrey thought, as they pressed on, over the splashed stones. The priest was quickening. "Where in the wide world—?" he muttered, and then, again, "What were they all about, to leave him in that way?" And then, "And he the creature he is, as apt to do any one thing as another!" He was running now, this way and that, slipping and using his hands to keep up, with his hat pushed back from a forehead hot with anxiety as well as haste; from each fresh stone that he topped he peered outward to where the waves at its seaward base were thumping and splitting.

"I'll engage it was here he was working," said Power, scrambling on to another smooth and high boss with a wet nap of green; and, surely, from there they saw a singular sight. Eight or ten yards out to sea, as if drawn away from the rocks by a backwash, a short, shapeless bundle of cloth was floating, most of it under water, but part still emergent and dry and looking unnatural there, and horrible. The priest gave a sob and slid over the edge of the rock into eight feet of water and struck out with short, clumsy strokes for the bundle. Then Aubrey first saw that it was a man's back, with the head and legs hanging down under water. Luckily Aubrey had a good high take-off on that rock; he could dive pretty well half the way through the air, and, swimming hard from the instant his own body was under, he opened his eyes to see the drowning man bulk dim between them and the daylight above, the pendent head and legs like the ends of the golden fleece on a coat of arms. Aubrey came up outside it and had the man fast by the back of the clothes, with the drooping head held clear of the water, when, as his eyes sought the shore, he felt a glow of delight that almost made him cry. The priest was arriving—the old brick!—the most absurd, beautiful sight in the world, with his little, ineffectual strokes and grave, intent look, and the black coat ballooning high over his back with all the air from about the rest of his person gone into it.

There was work for ten minutes, to bring the three in to the little spit of stones, between bigger rocks, where Devine had been scraping weed when a wave

took his tired feet from under him. Aubrey feared at one moment that Power was done for; he had to be helped; but on shore he toiled again like a good one and knew what to do: how to empty the water out of their man, where to rub, and the way the arms should be worked to set the lungs going, if it could be done. They labored absorbedly; minutes it might have been for, or hours, for all they could tell. No, though; it could not be hours: it was not dark yet when Devine began to splutter and fight in their hands and wail in the Gaelic, "Not into the sea again!" And when Aubrey and Power were free to look at each other across him, each had light to see that the other's face was green with these last urgent minutes of terror. That exchange gave them an instant of vast, flowless pleasure; each found out the other, and lo! what he found was himself. It was like one of the fugitive beatitudes that visit a few moments of awaking, when some happy thought comes first and nothing else is remembered yet. Then they remembered other things, as the awakened sleeper does.

They could not rest yet. Devine was burnt and stabbed with pains as the blood moved again; he had worked foodless all day and was for collapsing and trying to sleep. He had to be hustled homeward and finally shouldered by Aubrey, the priest trotting stoutly beside the big younger man, showing the way through the dusk and telling Devine, as hearteningly as his own chattering teeth would permit, of the great glass of grog that would surely be lawful for once, and he perishing.

It was dark when they left Devine's cabin; darker

than it would be soon, for clouds were packing away and on the horizon a luminousness that spread as it mounted showed where the moon—what was left of the mighty moon of Mill Hill—was about to rise. They had chattered till then, to keep Devine's mind running on the right things, as a man makes a noise to a horse while grooming it. Now they fell wholly silent. It was a short way they still had to walk, but rough; the priest knew every yard by its feel; Aubrey did not; once he stumbled slightly over a stone. The priest's arm was in his in a moment. "God help you, God help you!" he said in a voice of extraordinary kindness.

Aubrey laughed. "No harm done." But when they came into the lamplight within the priest's door, there was still on the priest's face the look of hurt and sore compassion that it must have had when he spoke, for the voice had been that look made audible.

"Off and away with you now to your room," he said; they had kicked off their boots in the hall, on the ugly oil-cloth, under the paraffin lamp and the oleographs of martyrs. Power was playing the brisk, imperious host, but it was a manner superimposed; that other mood, of a tormented affection or pity, showed through it.

Insensibly Aubrey reacted, resisted. He would not be fathered; he was autonomous; he was all right. Yes, he would change his clothes, he said, but no bed or hot bottles for him; he had liked the bathe. Whisky? Yes, that would be jolly, and then he would turn out and walk himself warm before supper.

CHAPTER XIX

“Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.”

CLOUGH.

THERE was only one way Aubrey could walk: the one road was to Banturk. He caught its raw end by the white gleam on the blackening moor, and strode along, always faster and faster. The blood tingled back into fingers and toes; into the brain too, no doubt, for soon thought was astir and bubbling; it danced and sang through him. What liquor the priest's was!—brown velvet and honey and amber and Rembrandt and old fiddle varnish—trains of similes for it tripped across the hot mind. And the priest, what a staunch old Trojan! Soft-hearted too—he had gurgled over Devine like a mother cat. And decent to Aubrey, the heathen, too. And then there were all his ruthless withholdings and temperings of Athanasian curses on that other heathen, the breakwater-builder. What a man that must have been, too! He would have to tell June what he thought of that man.

Aubrey tried to figure him clearly, piecing him out from the things that Power had said of him. They were but small things—he felt that the more, now that he made them all come back; they were false starts, each had begun and then stopped, and each had been

said with a wince and a picking of phrases, as if some sting had to be taken out in the wording. And yet this man of the light and the clock and the road was real and vivid, even poignantly real, as those people are whom one knows best of all; his takings of means to ends were all touching, like those of a friend alone in a house at night and seen from outside a window. Aubrey could swear he knew just what that man had felt when the infant Horgan re-embraced the grand adventure of living. Why, Aubrey could hear what the man's very voice had been like.

They were strange, these priests; they were all of a piece, or a piece of them all was. O'Keel had his touch of Power's own visible twinge of controlled compunction towards Aubrey. All these priests had had it, only each more than the last, ever since Aubrey had landed. No, that was wrong; it was since the time he saw the Archbishop. It had begun from the moment of that little boast of his, surely harmless enough, of his mother's kinship to one of their own august selves, the Cardinal. Yet they were different men, all these like-mannered priests. The mind could not vision the archepiscopal chaplain going to work as Power had done on the plain, humdrum, secular job of landing Devine—mere physical sport for Aubrey's young strength, as he knew, but a tax on courage in those non-amphibians. O'Keel, again, would not have looked just the way Power did, that time when the boys scuttled off in the twilight between cabin walls, singing, "We'll hang ould"—ould what was it? What was it? He found he was importuning

his memory now as he might have asked a doctor whether an illness of June's was mortal.

The man had been Aubrey's father. He walked back to Cusheen knowing it. No one had told him. The knowledge rose up in him like a night flood, furtive and sudden. At one moment it seemed as if no conscious suspicion or fear were pressing; the next, all the dikes gave together; the long effort, secret even from his own sense, to bank out each trickling advance of the oncoming deluge was quite over. "We'll hangould Browne"—why, one lobe, or whatever it was, of his mind, had heard it clearly; the other had only just managed to hush it up. And every look and tone of these priests had been throwing the fact at his eyes and ears. More than that, he felt now as if he had all but known it since he was a child; it was the only key that there could ever have been to so many of the silences of home.

The end gave him no pain at first. They say a good bullet traveling fast will go through your vitals so cleanly that you may be left not writhing nor even bleeding much, but only musing, "I'm done for," or, with detachment, "That other poor buffer that was 'I' is done for," and taking in whatever there is to see—high grass or cairned stones or things going on in the sky—with the eager liking the spirit has for the concrete things of which it is to take leave. So Aubrey at first felt a kind of dry pity, as if for some man in a semi-vivid book who had set out on his way whistling, like other people, and then some brute of an un-killed force had broken loose from the dark ages and

mauled him. He could not feel more than that yet; he was, indeed, unconsciously resting, as hunted fugitives find a great peace at first when they are caught. But the place at which he was hit had become already curiously memorable. The first Cusheen cabin was near; squat under its thatch it thrust a rude angle, anyhow, out at the track, now no longer a road; in a window, a squalid, square port-hole in mud, a candle just lit was struggling and blinking into steadier flame. He had a rather hunger-like thought of the state of those who were round that bleared light, to whom nothing had happened.

The priest, crouching over the parlor fire, looked up from his Latin A-Kempis when Aubrey came in. The priest saw, directly. He made Aubrey sit in a chair and stood behind him with both hands on his shoulders. "You know?" Power said.

"Yes."

The priest, in misery, pressed and stroked the big shoulders. "Ah, you're the kind, bold fellow," he almost wailed. "You've been it this day, and will always."

The wheedling's beginning, thought Aubrey. He made a hard voice. "You want me to skulk away into the dark."

"Is it 'dark'? Isn't it two weeks only, or three, since ever you set eyes on your cousins? And is it out of the sky the sun would be dropping now if they were to go their own way from this out, and you yours?"

"Yes." Aubrey was beaten too weary to hold up secrets now.

The priest's hands ceased for an instant to press Aubrey's shoulders. Then they urged down again warmly as if instant in some caressing adjuration, before he could muster the words he wanted. "They say there was once a village in England, maybe the size of Cusheen, and those that were in it found the Great Plague had come to them, God knows how, all the great way from London; and what did they do but shut themselves up from the world, the way it would burn itself out in them only? Skulkers off into the dark would any one say that they were? Or is it heroes and martyrs?"

Aubrey listened and noted intently, ploddingly, with an impassioned diligence. How would June see it all? He had to make that out; he must take means to that end. The Catholic June, the directress of her whom he knew, was unknown to him, only surmised and dimly feared as an estranging sea of unfathomed depth. He must plumb it, if only conjecturally, by taking soundings of Power and, through him, of these devotees in the mass. He asked, in his matter-of-fact way, "Something immodest, noisome—you'd feel I was like that?"

The priest was in torment. "The acts of the fathers, you know—they're 'visited.'"

"Oh, say 'sins' if you like; it can't harm my father with me." Aubrey returned to the quest. "A Catholic woman, we'll say—she'd feel the house stinking, round her, with me in it?"

Again the poor priest shied away. "The children

reap whirlwinds; isn't it nature? Ah, come away to your supper."

Over the food they talked about rents and the orient hope of land purchase, and how kelp was burned and the product sold to makers of—iodine, was it, or some iodide? Aubrey forgot which, and came back to Power, just before bedtime, to get it right for the *Northerner*. Lights were out in the house at eleven, Aubrey's the last. In bed, with his journey-work done, he let loose his imaging mind. It fell to, like a draftsman long starved of paper; it drew him June posed as she stood that time when she spoke of women who would not take a gift of a son's life from a recreant. How she glowed now in his vision, and grew taller again, a very pillar of exaltation! He did not reason now, but evoked sequent images, or they came; cause and effect rose before him in pictures of June—June drawing in, like flowers at night, on a light word from Guy about prayer; June awesome in towering scorn of that ribald woman's chatter with Newman; June crying, "I love them for it; I love them" at thought of these self-starvers, self-stunters here at Cusheen, fantastic fakirs of a cramping superstition; June as the June of those moments might look when first she heard what he was, her neck lifting up, more columnar, more white, its warm curves straightening and chilled; her eyes thrown on guard and looking out at him over lids that had turned into estranging fences.

Moated and walled, she would gaze out and down. She loved him, but what help was that? Probably worse than none; love would only challenge her pride

to crush it; he saw her fastidious, disdainful, pagan really, like some one whim-driven by chivalric honor, romantic unreason, inhaled irrevocably; she would not wince while she paid any horrible tax on human affection and happiness; she would glory; the knight's soul in her would exult in its chance of peril and pain. Why, it was for that he loved her; she would not be June without her ardent yieldings to unenforceable rule and her flushed, vibrant staunchness; like a flame or a lance it burned and pierced up at—nothing, perhaps; empty air, or air turbid with old myths, fables of dead men that took life again and of unnatural childbirth—horrible dregs of mythologist's stuff, like Dionysus and Pan; worse, because people soiled kindness and courage and all the good things by trying to make them "rest on" those vulgar credulities.

Reason with her? It was hopeless. Had June's faith come of reason, reason might pierce to it. Reason! Why, she stood fenced with distrust of the brain, the tool used in fashioning meanness; if she saw evidence coming her doors would clang to; she would not even look while proof, the mountebank, contorted itself outside in the mud. If all the world came up to show that her creed was a thing bygone and outworn, her mettle would only be steeled to stand by it in troubled days. That was June too—to be like that; had he not loved her for being like that? He had thought, what mattered the object of generous passion?—the passion itself was the thing; who would not know how to choose between a cold world always right and a blind one on fire with foolish loyalties?

Why, he loved her the more even now as he thought, oh, she will carry it through. Proof of confusion would make her faith only the more imperturbable; it would be stronger for its cobweb flimsiness; any bullets the mind could devise would glance off those feathers and spend themselves uselessly on that light sand.

His body was hot; he must have walked slowly, or stopped dead, for some longer time than he knew, when he was hit; he had some little "chill," as they call a shiversome glow that burns for relief in more and more heat. He drew up his legs, drew the clothes over his head; the body's fire began to burn like red embers blown white, and the mind caught heat from it; whatever thought came was lit, at each return, with a fiercer incandescence of clarity. He entered, he thought he was entering, into June's steadfast horror of him as he was; he heard it like music; it had the mounting, passionate urgency of some great strain drawn out on violins, one long, importunate scaling of illimitable height; he saw it a preternatural spire that never ceased to reach up further at the retreating sky.

What to do, then? He did not even try, yet, to resolve. All that he saw was many impossibles. He could not write to June and not tell her. He could bate nothing, to her, of the love and honor that he had renewed here for his father. He could not relinquish her—play the kind brute and tell her some stage lie—that he did not love her really; that would be loathsome; it reeked of pink sentiment, stuff for half-made women to maunder over in books. And it must fail,

lies were so feeble; think of them both alive after the clap-trap of self-immolation was done; the world would not hold them both; from the ends of opposite winds their souls would beckon and rush together. Why, what was there to keep them apart? They were all but touching now, her desire and his reaching out to each other like visible breaths that pierce a frosty air; between them was nothing impenetrable, even by loveless stars. Rival impossibilities everywhere, and a choice of dead walls. Only this much he settled, in his pedestrian way; he must walk right up to those walls and feel them all over with his hands.

Could he say that he was wretched? He asked himself that. Self-pity, the sneak, had come whining round him, eyeing him for a weak place, trying hard to corrupt happy memories into sorry plaintive ones, whispering maudlin questions—had he not been, when a boy, a pitiful figure with his great projects lamely framed in solitude, and their frustrations stolidly borne in it? Had it not all come again, plan and frustration? Had he not been inoffensive? And now this foul beast of an unspent force had broken out of its limbo and hit him. “Say, ‘Oh, my God, why am I forsaken?’ just to yourself, here in the dark,” the whimpering tempter prompted. It made his mind shudder to see how near to one’s feet could be brought the top of that greased slope down into pits of slime. So he asked what he really felt. Misery? Nothing like any misery ever ascribed, in any book that he knew, to an ill-starred lover. Had no writer ever known what it was?—or was he unlike natural people?

For—he could not blink it—he had an exultation even now; some part of him had wings and rose from this new earth of vast pains and unbelievable crushings of hope, and gloried, against all reason, in seeing its vastness and strangeness outspread. It was anguish, but vision too; it opened the burning heart of life. And it was adventure, like all shipwrecks; it roused; it gave things to do, or attempt; and he was alive; the miraculous license to move, to watch, to do this and not that, was still his; even to-night the next breath always came, the ache of the instant before was over, and some infinitesimal cell in his brain the stronger to bear the next if he had borne the last with a will. He had sweated the chill away now and lay at length, tired and cool, hearing the endless, desolate splash of the waves on the rocks below, where the priest had turned human.

CHAPTER XX

"When we find an element in different contexts, it acquires new meanings for itself, and it gives new meanings to the elements in these contexts. The element remains in a sense the same, but it is also continually changing with every new connection into which it is brought. The progress of knowledge may therefore be represented as the pursuing of identities through ever-increasing differences."

R. L. NETTLESHIP.

FOR two more days Aubrey worked on at Cusheen; it helped him; at least it put off, illusively; work that is hard and worth doing can make the doer feel as if surely the rest of the world must be coming to rights. On the third day, an hour before Aubrey left, the priest received a telegram. They were at lunch: Power passed it across. "It's to you," he said, "that it ought to have been. I amn't the one that's drawn water out of the rock."

It seemed that people had read in the *Northerner* Aubrey's first screed from Cusheen and were sending money in haste, and plenty of it—"More than enough," Power said; "it's a grand thing for any man to be able to write the way you could make them do that, and they English."

Aubrey looked at him, trying to guess what he meant. "I suppose," he thought, "it is 'Damn them both, father and son. Can't we ever be quit of their cursed help?' or 'I won't be rough on him; I'll send the money back quietly after he's gone.'"

He told Power he wanted some help: he was going to Dublin; he had to go into some things—family things, of his own.

Alarm sprang up in the priest's face.

"Oh, I'll do it skulkingly," Aubrey assured him.

"It's only this," Power said humbly, "your aunt that's a nun at Rathfarnham is delicate. Any shock now—"

"I'll have a false name, if you wish. But I must find out. They were *my* father and mother. Oh, yes, I know, I know—" Aubrey waved away whole cloud-armies of deprecatory fears and demurs half-discerned in the looks of the priest. "But I must see where they lived. I must see people who knew them and knew their fathers and mothers—knew everything. There must be people like that. They both died before they were old. You can help me to that?"

"I'll do what I can. For God's sake, be careful. It's not like the great world—this little country. It's just the one village, and everything's known about every one in it. The wonder is it was only the Archbishop's chaplain that first had a notion of who in the world you were."

"I'll take any precaution you want. I'll be Mike from Australia, a cousin's fifth cousin, burning to work out a pedigree. May I take the addresses?"

When shy men begin to be brazenly dogged, then obstacles, if they are versed as priests are in the ways of our froward hearts, are apt to take themselves out of the way. Power gave Aubrey addresses. Some

were of his maternal kinsmen, O'Gormans and Kennedys, cousins of whom he had not before heard so much as the names.

Power annotated each name as it came: "a big stockbroker in Dame Street;" or "not a thing in the world will he do but polo-playing from one year's end to the next;" or "the greatest whisky-drinker in Leinster, God help him, and he with a talent for banking if he could be steady." They seemed a poor lot, full of money and indistinction. There were priests, too, on Power's list; these were not of the family. Aubrey stiffened, perhaps, at the first of their names. Power winced. "You'll not hear a word," he said, "that'd hurt you."

"You're telling them nothing?"

The priest held out to Aubrey the circular letter of introduction that he had been writing to these divines. Aubrey waived the perusal, but looked at Power surprisedly. So the elfin cordon was broken a little at last; the human child decoyed into the wood had even made friends with one of its peering gnomes till it would keep a small secret of his from the others. And all, he fancied, because he had once had his wits about him and knew how to swim. Curse all the caprice of these mad assessments of people's conduct; the cards that "made" among these devotees were as strange as the cards that did not make. Still, this time unreason had got him a thing he wanted; let that make its peace; thanks to it, he would go on his quest as an unknown crank delving at family history harmlessly; people would humor him.

Power was pressing his last hospitality—champagne, of all things; a bottle was brought in, open, with word that the car stood at the door. Aubrey was glad of the wine. There must, anyhow, have been discord between their dun thoughts and their acted genialities of speeding host and of guest sorry to go. But that they should pledge each other, at parting, in that jocund heart's blood of unreserve—this lifted the scene into barbaric grotesque; so Aubrey felt, and was piqued to act the fantasy out in its own wild key; it was easier so.

He took his last look at Cusheen as the outside car went over the shoulder of the high moor. A dull afternoon was closing in early; the place looked effaced; all he could make out, for sure, was the petulant white hem of foam fretting between the lead of the sea and the lead of the land. He looked till it went out of sight, and then sat very still on his side seat, back to back with the driver, and stared straight before him with eyes nearly closed, seeking the half-trance that may come of a dazed, bleared intentness of sense, not on this thing or that, but on palpableness, the whole range of it. Soon it came; there ceased to be here a rock, there a cloud, there a wind-vexed stump of a tree; there were not separate things any longer, only a rush and a passing; not drifting objects, but drift, motion set free to be a self of its own, not a mere state of selves other than it. And he was secure and snug; he was no object now, either; not a person; only a sense, a perception, released from the service of a possessor; it had no past to mind and no

future; all cables were cut and it floated off, a tissue of disinterested sentience; it and that disengaged soul of motion were all that was left of all that there ever had been; and then they too began to lose their differentness from each other: which was it that felt and which that was felt? Foolish question!—so he mused in his trance; why, all those old childish illusions of subject and object were gone; act and consequence, cause and effect, one's self of to-day and the self it builds for to-morrow, yes and to-day and to-morrow themselves, and oneself and that which had seemed to be outside oneself—all the illusive haunting distinctions that used to be matters of course were dried up like early mists; nothing was left but clear consciousness poised in a void; unhampered, unmoved, unrelated, a consciousness only of being penetratingly conscious. A god might be like that for ever, it has been thought. Aubrey sat like a god of that kind for he knew not how long; an hour, perhaps, or a second; time does not count in those states.

Suddenly his divinity ended. Some solid withdrew from behind his back: he turned in time to see the driver alight, a loose heap, on the road; he seemed to have fainted and rolled off the car. Luckily he had not taken the reins with him. Aubrey pulled up the scandalized horse, which was for bolting, drove back to the spot and found the man conscious now, wriggling and groaning and soon well enough to feel for the bump he had on his head and to rub it thoughtfully, sitting squat in the mud. Nothing but hunger ailed him; he called the inopportune faint a “quare-

ness," confessed he had had it before, and sought to pass it off as an innocent fad of the body's. Aubrey came the priest over him, dourly tickled to find how easy it came—bullied and tricked the truth out of him, then drove the car into Banturk, with one hand on this ragged genius of famine, to keep it in place.

They ate the best meal to be had at the public-house near the station. The landlord had wine; it seemed the thing to make the food stay on a starved stomach. When they had eaten they sat half an hour together to finish the bottle and smoke and await Aubrey's train. The man expanded, was almost a wit; he gave his history genially, seeing it with the eye of tolerant humor, back to his wild youth in the days of th' ould priest before Father Power, "him that's in tormint, plase God."

Aubrey made no return of autobiography. But he encouraged the willing witness; he kept up a grin and put leading questions and drew replies that could make him wince, though he was toughening. It was good practice, he thought, for what he would have to do now. Rather a dirty trick, though, when one came to play it. It was too easy; this driver would rise to any fly you could cast; he would say, with a happy sense of hitting the mark, the last things that in his good nature he would have said had Aubrey been frank. Aubrey felt like a sneak, and a bruised one, afterwards, as he sat in the train. But he would go through with this; he did not have even to will it now; it was the one road to be gone; the depth of the mud, or

the hits he might take on the shins, were things that he might wish away, but as to the route, there was no other.

He carried the quest right through. When once he had made up his mind to soiled hands, the rest was as easy as pumping that driver. His mother's brothers and sisters and her own mother and father were soon almost visible to him, immensely far off and immensely clear. He saw their life as geologists see the old tropical Thames with the hippopotami half sunk in hot mud at noon, their beatified backs gently surging and sinking. James O'Gorman, his grandfather, loomed out like a veritable monster of the prime. An old priest at Merrion had known him. "A thoroughly good practical Catholic; never missed Mass and would walk all round Dublin after it, seeing was there a ground rent for sale at a price a person could look at." A gray chapel-keeper near Drogheda had kept James's books when James set up in youth as a wine merchant. "God help us all," he said, "when a pipe of sherry was bottled and there was not in it the number of bottles he'd hoped for." "Holidays, is it? He neither gave them nor took them." "He hadn't a prejudice in him. 'So long as a Protestant pays,' he'd say, 'let God do the rest to him.'" Pieced into life in Aubrey's mind by a score of such touches, the old O'Gorman got on his feet, exciting, redoubtable, grisly, an Irishman of the breed that England has raised for herself as the Christian has bred for himself the stinged Jew. Aubrey could see him, acquisitive, obstinate, all his pride stowed away in his bunkers

as coal for his engines; could even fancy minutely how his flesh crawled, in secret, when some Englishman, driving a bargain, would lug in his "plain sense of duty" every third minute, the horse smelling the camel and loathing it, only not to the marring of instant business.

Then there was word to be had of how this dragon had wived—"a grand thing it was for the two of them, he with the money he'd made and she with a fortune the fellow of it, that her father had made with the great contriving he had with shares when the first railways were made, and she with a turn for saving, the equal of his. James's whole family couldn't bear her stepping in—he'd done everything for them till then—and you may engage she returned it in the way she got shut of them cliver and clane, in a short time, and her own people too, that had nothing to do but have her tormented, asking for money, till she put a stop to it. The end of it was they were left in a great house in Merrion Square that they had, alone with the children."

"They had children?" Aubrey dishonestly asked the old clerk.

"They had. Three girls that are living, may be, to this day, and two boys that were one as wild as the other, God rest them. Dempsey's place was the death of them."

Dempsey's: Aubrey's mind made a note which led him to penetrate, the next night, to a small cube of strong light and convivial stuffiness tucked away at the far end of a burrow-like entry. Bloods of the present

age were sitting pleased on the ends of casks and a landlord of forty years old was not concealing his own belief that they were grand fellows; Dempsey to Dempsey succeeds, and blood to blood.

"It was the one bit of pleasure that came to them," so the old clerk had gone on. "Never a card would the mother have in the house, and scarcely a book, nor give them a horse to ride, and they great at it; 'What could they do,' she'd say whenever they asked, 'but break its knees on the road or destroy it out hunting?' Indeed, the hunting was what they both wished to be at. And never a latch-key between them, down to the day the last died. I lived in the house at the time, and she'd lie awake every night of the week to call out to each of the boys, and he crawlin' upstairs on all fours, 'Did you bolt the front door when you'd entered?' to show she was seeing the kind of work they were about.

"When they were gone there was only the husband in it for her to torment, besides women. Dear, but she was the hard one; you'd be entitled to think her body was all the one piece with her nails. Nothing would do her, if James displeased her at all, but to take a whole pack of the foreign bonds that he had, th' instant minute he'd quitted the house, and have them hid away on him and he coming home in the evening: you'd hear him all through the darkness of night walkin' about like th' unquiet dead in his pain and callin' out, 'Give me my bonds,' on the stairs and landin', in the deep voice he had, the moral, for all the world, of blood cryin' out from the ground, until you'd

be frikened to hear, but herself, that was a great sleeper, not mindin' at all.

"He died, at the end, of a pain in his bowels, the sort they'd cut out of you now with a knife in the time a horse would be waggin' his tail, but he didn't over it. Great work she had with him, three nights or four, sitting up in her clothes by the bed till she'd have him persuaded to make a new will the way he'd leave nothin' at all to the three girls for their own, but wait till their mother'd see how they got on. Biddy Foy, that was housekeeper then, and myself were kept perishin' out in the cold at the door, to be witnesses, while he'd be moanin' and yowlin' within, and herself comin' back to it always, as soon as you'd hear for the groans, that Kate, who'd just gone to the convent, would not need a penny again in this world, and as for Minnie—"

"June's mother—so that was her name," Aubrey silently noted.

"—why, in the state she was in since the brothers had died on her, she'd be as apt as not to fling it away to the poor, every sixpence; and God only knew what wild work was the next thing Nora'd be at—"

Aubrey winced at his mother's name, though he had seen it coming.

"—and she not at Mass for a month past; and wasn't it only a poor lookout he'd have, where he was goin', if he didn't give his mind to it now and see that nothin' desprit was done with his money after? Great talkin' she had, an' she not seemin' to be in a hurry at all, or anxious itself, and it a close race, with the

stren'th to write goin' out of his body—I question will I or any one else in the world see the finish to equal it. She was a wonderful woman; she bate all, and he left every penny to her, that was jinglin' with money already, before he went shriekin' out of his senses. I do assure you, Biddy and I had no sooner written our names than we lep' down the stairs, a match for a couple of greyhounds, holdin' our hands to our ears."

"Biddy Foy? They tell me she's caretaker now at Barnbrack, the great house in Wicklow that Mrs. O'Gorman bought for herself when James had left her the richest woman in Ireland. When she died it went to the daughter Minnie that married an Englishman from Dublin Castle; he was a Catholic though; the mother took good care of that; she'd the earth and the fullness thereof at that time and she wasn't the woman to miss Heaven too, when the time for it came."

CHAPTER XXI

"Love, no one can beat you. You have at the rich; you can step over a sea; there you are, at your work, in quiet houses out in the country. There isn't the saint can say he's shut of you surely, and what of the rest of us all, the May-flies we are. The time you come in, understanding quits out of us."

From the Hedge Schoolmaster's Sophocles.

NEXT day Aubrey made for Barnbrack, a great, frigid, classical house; like an iceberg astray in the Gulf Stream, it rose white and cold, that mild day, out of Wicklow's wild roses, fuchsias and lush honeysuckles. None of these idlers climbed on its actual walls; the lady's puissant reason had vetoed that, "and they with nothing to do but bring earwigs in at the window." Biddy Foy reported this judgment to Aubrey; and so the house stood naked as when it was born, and was moated about, like the Roc-à-Voir Inn, with loose stony gravel "the depth," as Mrs. Foy said, "of the world; it'd break the heart of a grub to set foot on it." She toddled over it painfully, showing Aubrey the place.

She was a palpable relic, this Mrs. Foy, a lingering trace like a blasted tree, or a glacier-marked stone in a green dale, of the mightiness of old, spent forces. When she took heart a little and let herself go, in her talk, she made Aubrey think of the faint resurgent stirrings of grass after the roller has done with it. Now and then she would seem to be sure for some moments that Mrs. O'Gorman was wholly dead, and that

the souls of the living were their own once more. Then would peep out "a wish she had in her mind, for some reason or other," to live in a house that was all "a smother of creepers." And then again, like the poor Indian, she would see Mrs. O'Gorman in clouds or hear her in the wind, and back would the well-beaten subject come to her duty with "After all, she was the wonderful woman," or "There was the depth in her sayings," or (steeling herself) "I often wish I could have a talk with her now."

Biddy was vivid, if spiritless. She had been printed upon by some gleams of the dreary splendor with which the widow O'Gorman had celebrated till death her triumphant return to "the land." Biddy, showing the stables, partly undid a swathed carriage, a monstrous piece, swung from the C springs of antiquity. "Not a day but the mistress would set out at two and be driven the whole country round, and she very inclined to be sick in a carriage. She hoped she'd conquer it yet. One man only she'd have on the box, and two standing behind on a board, and the nakedest dog you ever saw in your life, a mass of black spots, legging along for dear life beneath. She'd not have dog or cat near her, except in that situation only. 'They'd not do a thing in the house but eat,' she'd say, 'and they won't do that properly.' She was a wonderful woman at knowing the time to spend and the time to let it alone. Not a servant would stay in the house. 'They'd like to have more scope,' she said to me once, 'in batter puddings, but where would it end if I once began spoiling them?' Yet she'd do things

in style when the time for it came. People in Dublin itself will talk to this day of the way she buried the master. She'd speak of it often herself. 'Would any one ever believe,' she'd say to Miss Minnie, 'the frightful price the man charged for the coffin?' "

"Miss Nora? The new paint wasn't dry on the house before she was off and away to England, or God knows where in the wide world, to live in a poor shabby way, as if she had no respect for herself. Dear, but the mother hated her for it. She'd burn every letter, fresh from the post, and it not opened, and there was the row, I can tell you, the day Miss Minnie let on, coming back from confession, the way she had written, ay, and several times, to her sister. Terrible fond of each other the two girls were, and I don't rightly know that Miss Minnie ever had her health after the writing was stopped on her. She'd be in there in the drawing-room saying she only wished to do this or do that and be minding the poor or going off into the convent after Miss Kate, till her mother'd be angry and say, 'Why, you fool,' she'd say, 'why don't you go and get married?' Married she was, in a twelvemonth. What with the two brothers dead, and one sister with vows of poverty taken, and one quit out of the place wholly, the girl was the best match in Ireland. Not a tittle of love had she in her, for all the signs I could see; she'd as lief marry this one as that, and none at all better than any. The mother did it; she'd never let her alone till she had her engaged, and then, when the horrors of bein' married were near, Miss Minnie would say why shouldn't

she suffer as well as another, and anyway hadn't she promised? She had pride too, in a way of her own, though she never could keep a stiff lip to the mother. Too meek to please me, altogether.

"Miss Nora?—that was the wild Irish girl, as they say. Not a thing came into her head but she'd say it. The night Patrick, her last brother, had died, Father Browne of Cusheen reached the house half an hour too late, and what should she do but say to his face that she wouldn't wonder if God weren't hard on the boy at all, and he just after dying without the rites of the Church? You'd be astonished to see the way the priest took it. 'I'm thinking that too,' said he, 'a good while back.' She was afraid when she'd spoken, but, when he said that, I give you my word she looked as if she were more frikened still because he had not up and told her that it was no thing to be saying. I'll engage she was thinking what work he might have with the bishop, and not of herself at all. I was a favorite of hers, but she was the worry. You couldn't depend on her not to come home with her watch given away to a tramper that told her some tale on the road, the moral of those wild Fijians there in the paper, that can't elevate their position because no one comes and asks for a thing but they give it. The mistress never forgave the way she got on. 'Step in here at once,' she called to me over the stairs the day after Miss Nora quit out of it. 'Sign that,' said she, 'and mind what you're about with the ink on the furniture.' It was a new will, you may depend, and she in a desperate hurry to see to it lest she should die in the night

and the daughter not be deprived of her fortune. Miss Nora had come to me late on the evening before, and she not able to sleep with the way her thoughts had her tormented, what with her being wild, by that time, to be out of the place, and not wanting to go from the sister. 'Me heart's broke, Biddy,' she'd say the wan moment—she'd talk like the country people to me—and the next she'd be singing low to herself, 'My heart in the far world is yearning to roam'—it came out of a song she'd heard Father Browne singing that day. He was great at the singing. Midsummer eve it was, and a strong light still in the sky and it after ten at night, the way I could see the gleams come in her eyes and go out again."

"Was it very like water under a bridge at night," Aubrey asked, "with a lamp on it?"

"Maybe it was, and the cheeks of her flushing darker, and going light the next minute. She was the beautiful woman for color. You'd see a little pink cloud, like the light the sun 'ud send through the leaf of a rose, and it crossing the width of her face like the little shadows of clouds that do be running over the side of a hill, or the patches flytin' about on a field of corn with the little winds blowing."

"Yes, yes."

"You've seen her?"

"I've seen some one like it."

"There wasn't her aquil ever, if you could have seen her that night, with her voice like a warm creature nestled in her and she in a heave with the big wishes she had, and that gleam in her eyes in the dark till

you'd think of the loveliest fearful wild thing in a forest until you'd be terrified. That was the room, up above there."

The two were fording the loose depths of gravel back to the door, from a paintless and moldering bench whence they had viewed the garden front of the house. Death could not be stiller than this place where passionate hearts had hurt with very fullness of life in the June night's passionate dusk. It was afternoon now, humid and motionless; sleep began to invade Mrs. Foy, sleep and the fear that she might have said more than enough about her old likings and wonderments. What could the gentleman care about them? So she became elegant and impersonal, took up a newspaper lying about in the hall and, vaguely indicating a page, began to make talk of wider interest. "I see from the paper that Belgium's a wonderfully industrious country. The women that's in it are all bent double with working. The men are idle—you'd see them sittin' out at the doors—I don't know whether it's that lager beer that they're at, or what?"

"Did you hear from Miss Nora again?"

"I did not, and she a great warrant to write, or talk itself, about anything ever she saw till she'd have you excited with wishing you'd seen it, the way I'd liefer read one of her letters than ten of Miss Kate's, that were all desiring your prayers and wondering could nothing at all be done for Rev. Mother Superior's toothache, and that only."

He lingered, making up questions. None of them mattered much; at least, the direct answers did not—

only the gleams that would come now and then from the glow of his mother's youth, retracted fitfully from this old mirroring mind. They were enough to see everything by. Imagination can piece out reality fast when it works with passion, burning along each line of conjecture and reaching mightily out to span breaks of connection. Feeling back all the way through his own youth to childhood, he read at every turn some inscription illegible then, not even a matter of curiosity; now explicit, voluminous. Why, his father and mother had always been talking about and around it all, every day till one of them died, in a code of luminous silences, flashingly significant now, like letters cut out of a stencil plate, where blankness is legible. Once he had seen a man at a fair stand flat against a white board and another man throw two-score of black knives that stuck in the board all round him, a nail's breadth from hurting him, so that at last, when the man stood away from the board, his figure was drawn upon it, as unstabbed space. It was like that. All his life the knives had been flying and now the figures stood out; the void was graphic.

Where he did not know how this or that passage had gone, he knew how it must have. He knew like the back of his hand the old ruffian O'Gorman and that fell, notable dragoness, with her stomachic craving for land and a hulking barouche and a Danish dog to shank along after it; what a union of reason, and what hell for its children! He knew all about the dismal large house in a sunken capital—all the unhumanized, humorless social rising, the hatred of play

and mirth as unacquisitive things and doors into vice; probably there had been frozen dinner-parties, where every one kept his facial muscles jammed fast in a selected position, implied his own proper share of importance in everything that he said, and looked out for faults in the entertainment, to talk about afterwards with his wife. Poor devils of boys, his uncles, growing up tortured with hunger for all the unpaid dues of their youth. Only the other day he had been young, and the year's youth and the day's so working on his that it seemed almost vile to be reading indoors; it was self-mutilation; the sensuous blood had run bubbling, crying out to be slaked in ecstasies of union with the June meadows and the sunned stream. He had had these, and they had had Dempsey's and that moment of cheap magic, about the third glass, when all the voices fuse into one mellow luster of sound, the hum of an easier, more friendly world. Entering it so, they were done for; they had been given no chance; "through the pit infernal, down to the grave of McGinn and Burns," he watched them slipping and tumbling.

When they had been executed by phthisis at last, and the windows thrown up in the house for the waxen smell to escape, all that were left became only clearer; the father and mother putting it harshly to God that the fault was not theirs; Kate cowering back to the nunnery where she had cowered at school till a few months before, perceiving now that outside its palings there could be nothing but evil; Minnie numbly fumbling away, for an anodyne, at good works; and the other, the one that was all light and air, throb and

glow, flaming out at the tall young priest and gasping to find that he had been changing too. Was that the beginning of their great love? It might have been. For they must have gazed at each other quite simply when he had spoken; yes, both had done that—Aubrey knew them; and there might have been a silence that swore them comrades in consciousness of the great ship sinking under them, and of the frailty of rafts, and the width of the sea.

Then, of course, they had had to lose themselves, separately, lest the mud that flies round unfrocked priests should bespatter poor Kate or Minnie or some other innocent—Minnie's possible children, perhaps. That must have been why they lived all that time in Italy, Switzerland, France, and then by the tidal Thames' Babylonish waters. They were extinct there; all the past part of them was; they had cut their lives in two and become like a man and woman born mature, alone and relationless as Adam and Eve, and set on remaining so, bent on keeping clear for their young one the newly-made world in which their old world's marks would be rubbed off the slate and life could be what the owner made it. So that was why even he had never been told; he was to start fair. As if that were possible! Why, the mere fact that they were in hiding at Strand-on-the-Green, and he not to know it, had swelled and swelled till it ruled all their ways with each other at home; it had planted crepuscular woods of reserve and annealed chilly steels of hard self-reliance. He could see now the way that he had been made, and why he had been so queerly fur-

tive in pushing his great schemes when a child, and grotesquely stoic in taking defeats that need not have come; what roundabout ways he had taken to scraps of common knowledge that other children, no doubt, got for the asking. He might be the same now; probably was, for made is made and cannot go back; he might be walking as far round now, to run up against a near dead wall in the end, as he was when he made his idiotic attempts to dance and learn music; perhaps he was standing now as far outside the world of scruples and awes in which a young Catholic woman must live, as he had been outside the whole universe of social lightness when he was paying dues to Signor Bellaggio. He must make surer, must go to places where his warped mental sight might be helped—to churches where there was Mass, or where veiled women were flitting in to confess in chapels out of the aisles. He dimly understood that his mind had lost the unconscious bloom of its first health; it had to think out possible aids and do repairs in itself and guard against maladies. First he pored over June's letters again, forcing himself to give weight to whatever he, being made as he was, might have minded too little. "I prayed for you to Mary, Mother of God." He fixed on the words; he strove to prevent himself from shirking; he strained till all the letter's passion was in them, telling himself all the time that he could not bend himself that way enough, could not hope ever to figure, by any effort, all the depth and dream of June's abandonment of her reason and will to the mystic rule of her faith.

CHAPTER XXII

“O the sacrifice!
How ceremonious, solemn, and unearthly
It was i’ the offering!”

The Winter’s Tale, Act iii., sc. i.

THE ante-chapel is large and ill-lit in the Chelsea Church of the Holy Name; through the gap in the screen that walls it off from the rest of the church the crowd of last comers and born choosers of lower seats look from obscurity into light, and, if they are placed near the middle, see the thin veils of incense pushing or dispersing up, a great way off, like the smoke almost burnt into flame over a furnace. Aubrey, sitting more at one side, could not see the altar; all that was to be done there would be round a corner, for him; he would have to infer its progress from what the people did who could see; a wave of genuflection, no doubt, would roll out at the right moments through the break in the screen and so unbrokenly on, round its corners. He had been in this place when a boy; at first, in those days he had wanted to find what to think about people’s squabblesome creeds and patent rights in bliss or damnation; but soon he had let all that rest; there were no ghosts, and dead people did not get up, but why should not any one say they did, if he liked? People often said their blood boiled, or their tongues were tied; no doubt it was only meant

in that way. Christ's life was another matter—not to be thought about in such places, but read and wept over in secret with shamefaced agonies of love and admiration for one who would be so hooted if he lived now. That tragic and lovely life could have nothing to do with the composed unction of priests as they sprinkled the holy water—no more than the Psalmist's rending cries of writhing self-pity could have to do with the congregations who poured out the words of them, looking so glad of their good clothes. It had all been semi-private theatricals then, and not to be treated rudely by any visitors; so he had blinked up reverently towards the aspersing Roman brush and had inwardly applauded the Anglican vicar of Coway, near home, for that telling break and slow recovery of his voice, as if with undisguisable effort, when he had just said a moving thing in a sermon—that though tenderness, was not easy for him at all; the youthful Aubrey had once heard him rating the little soiled rag of a girl from the workhouse who did the rough work at the parsonage.

Music began, distant and muted like sounds of the street heard in illness. Music had never said things of its own to Aubrey—merely made his thoughts fluent; recollection and anticipation ran where they would, like our easily triumphing powers in dreams. Now he was picturing June, still a child, as she must have been on those old Sundays, nearing already the heart of this mystic marvel, soaking its essences in till all the tissues of mind and heart were charged and stained with them unchangeably, while he had prowled

and peeped from outside like the boys round a tent where there may be a circus. And all the time June and he had been drawing nearer and nearer; that old fancy of all lovers next filled him; he trembled, as all of them do, to think how many miracles of choice and of chance had conspired throughout their lives along the two convergent lines, wavering, broken, uncertain, rushing together at last. Had his parents not settled in England, had he not been bitten with that mountain mania, or not gone to Oxford, or had Guy and he not met there—. Guy had attracted him oddly at Oxford—the pretty boy, prettily spoken, prettily mannered, amusingly, puzzlingly proof against the young summer's intoxicant loveliness. Guy had disturbed him then; he remembered now how he had tried to put to himself what it was about Guy or his ways that made you want to hear what he would say next and to see what he would do. They had said good-night in the resonant Broad as the clock struck the quarter before midnight; Aubrey had leant for a while out of his window, cooling himself at the antique hoariness of night shed on an Oxford moonlit and stone-cold. What had worked in him, heated him, even then? Groping impulses, instincts, a blind curiosity stirring like seeds that push furtively up through the dark clay, dim precognitions drawing him subtly towards June the unseen, as two spars adrift far apart at evening draw to each other strangely through all the night and are locked together at dawn? Coincidence—was there any such thing? Or was it only that there were spaces uncharted as yet, across which soul could hail

soul, sending a ripple running over some unperceived sea that was not a bar, but a bond?

Thought, shifting and eddysome, played round that fancy awhile and then drifted on. The music was rising and quickened his reverie. Then an intoning voice droned, with no care for what the words were, as if sense were dross, and reason no more than the mud on the earth is to one flying over it. Of course; they must seem so to June, who was free of this air; all the things he could say, the ways he could plead, must seem ignobly ugly to her, no better than some crétin's stuttering struggle to make clear his poor soiled desires. He was excluded; rightly or wrongly, what mattered it which? Perhaps they had got hold of something, these mystics—the ones that cared really. Perhaps it was all a mistake, an ageing world's maudlin effort to have back the dreams of its youth. What did it matter? He was excluded.

There came rolling out through the door in the screen a chant or sung collect, the words of it poised aloft on the tips of clear treble voices:—

*"Gratiam tuam, quaesumus, Domine, mentibus nostris infunde,
Ut qui, angelo nuntiante, Christi filii tui incarnationem cognovimus,
Per passionem ejus et crucem in Resurrectionis gloriam perducamur."*

He could have fallen down and worshiped the beauty of cadences falling like those, stooping like humbled queens, or floating like mists of high waterfalls down through a sunlit air, or alighting on earth with a snow-

flake's hesitant tenderness. They were delight, and yet hunger came from hearing them, thought ached and craved at them—flowers in ripening corn were like that; they preyed like lost loves; as if from some house of barred doors, to which we had lost them, they looked out through windows but never quite saw us, their eyes were so drowsed with fumes of their own beatitude. June was there, in that locked house of mystical ardors whose speech was these melodies. She had the key; she could hold the note of high rapture; she could build for herself, out of this spilt wealth of superb unreason; arch-like, it must lock its splendors together in strength when the keystone she had was put in; palace-like it must rise, arch upon arch of ordered, articulate ecstasy.

Then he saw her. He had just been thinking she might be there, when some one moved out of a seat far up the chapel, and there, in a space thus made, was the profile that no other could ever be like. It was upturned and grave; and behind it the light blazed whitest, throwing up dark, from the throat to the hair, the line from which the puissance and grace of all perfect curves of vases and daffodils, cornice and arch, must have come. She was watching the priest, he felt sure; Aubrey's eyes strove to bore through the air to reach hers; they seemed to do it; he fancied he saw her looks change as she followed the Mass out through its symbolist drama of abnegation transfigured into glory. Eager pity, loyalty, triumph—the shadow or light of each of these seemed to fall on her, cast by the invisible celebrant at the altar. How he played

on her; what could cope with that power to fire and thrill and persuade? While Aubrey gazed, the glow appeared to whiten and also recede, with June in it, drawing her back from the eye till she was a speck, still with its outline poignantly fair, but remote in quivering flame.

He sat back when the service ended. Best wait there and let her go first, he thought, and then slip out himself and sneak off. Before he could know what to say when they met, he would have to digest all this, that he had just taken in. But priest and assistants and choir had all to troop out through the ante-chapel; so those who sat there must stand up and watch the warm core of the rite breaking its shell, like a tropical thing over-ripe, and shedding itself abroad through the screen, still aglow and melodious and odorous, spilling its sensuous affluence. June passed, and then Aubrey waited on in the emptying building; horrible emptiness, not a clean void, but infested, deflowered, staling, all dust and used breath and flat fumes from the cup of the rite's glorious drunkenness. People too—as the last of them left he thought he could see illusion die out on their lips and eyes as fast as a rose afterglow sinks to dead white on the snow when real night comes. June would be different; she would not change; could he see her now she would be still the staunch fanatic, shaming those weak ones. Or might she—? Oh, it was useless, all this putting off; it was shirking; it only gave time for maudlin delusion to sneak its way in; the firing line was wher-

ever June was; it was only there that the thing to do, whatever it was, could be found. He rose and ran after her, slipping and pressing through the thinned rear of the leaving crowd.

She was in sight; that was good; she was alone, walking fast. "Miss Hathersage!" Aubrey called, at her shoulder, hardening himself to forego the right, lost or suspended, to say "June!"

She turned at the touch of the voice. She darted a hand out, or both; both, he thought afterwards. "You!" she cried; "Aubrey!" and looked as people do at a thing just thrown up in the air, with wide eyes and the lips apart, and the head back a little, so that the light fell clear on her face; it had a flush so sudden and strong that it seemed to move over her cheeks like a beautiful patch of red shadow.

"I saw you in that place," he said dully. All his might had been put into that first effort to speak to her coldly, and she had not even seen it; her generosity could not perceive it.

"You'll come down to-morrow?" she eagerly pressed him. "Early? No? In the afternoon, then. I go back to-night. You can't stay in the house. It's being painted and father and Guy are away for two days; I biouvac in my room and the drawing-room, the only dry spots. You'll stay at Brunt Farm. You don't know it, of course—our annexe, half a mile off, a place like a Swiss hotel's—a *dépendance*; we put people there, to sleep, when there's no room at home. We have not many bedrooms, you know."

She ran on, the little things that she had to say

tumbling over each other. Her eyes had no rest, either; now they would glance past his neck on one side and then on the other and then straight into his face, most shiningly, and then drop as if hit, and then lift and take light again. It was strange to Aubrey at first; he did not recognize it—had never seen any one else overjoyed, nor known that the word could ever mean all that it claims, and that the first rush of a happiness could be distraction and fritter its own expression away into incoherence. All the time she would talk, breaking off and restarting and flitting from this to that as if each theme were the only one in the world for one moment, and trivial the next—Cusheen; and Aubrey's play that had been performed—oh, triumphantly—while he was there; and a first brief of Guy's—or would that come later?—anyhow, a success of some sort; and the trouble it was to hold up their little secret—they really must give up their furtive trinket of privacy now. She talked as if harm might happen if there were a silence. "You'll find other guests at the farm—Dr. Schweinfurth, the African traveler, anthropologist, father's old friend; he's writing a book on our wild English ways; and—" her voice checked for the first time.

"Newman?" said Aubrey.

"Yes. He is still there. Guy seems to like him, and father, too. They think I judge harshly."

"He comes to your house?"

"Every day, when they're here. But now there's a rest. And you're coming. You're coming. You're coming." She had congealed for a moment; she

melted again, with a little fling of gladness, saying the words over and over again as if at the first time she had found something precious and then held it to gaze at. "Why did you not write any more?" she suddenly asked in a voice that did not chide, and scarcely inquired, but meant, "You might not write for a year, you might not give a sign, and I would not fear or doubt."

He stammered some lie about preoccupations. He had a dry throat; it had come on him while she talked. He failed; he had come out to tell her the truth, but the truth had changed—part of it had; for she was not what he had then foreseen; the thing to be wounded or crushed when he spoke was as much more a thing to be guarded and spared than he could ever have thought before, as life is more to be spared than a statue.

She did not wait for his last husky word; she broke in with an inarticulate murmur of soft remonstrance to soothe away the idea that she could exact excuses from him; why, she had not half thanked him for "all he had done"—it had made Cusheen rich, paid all its rents and upset beside it a cornucopia of new clothes and maize and seed potatoes. "Father Power has written and told me everything—oh, yes, everything."

Out of breath, her eyes dark with dilation, she looked at him with a fond wildness. Everything! Aubrey's teeth bit on the irony of it. Doubtless his little swimming practice with Power was "everything." Lithe, noble creature, generous and wild,

that did not yet know it was caged; it licked the bars unsuspectingly. Aubrey turned from her, disabled again.

When they said good-by his hand returned her full pressure. He groaned for it when she was gone. He had done nothing yet, had drifted on, only.

CHAPTER XXIII

“O that ’twere possible,
After long grief and pain,
To find the arms of my true love
Round me once again!”

TENNYSON.

JUNE had two callers next day, before Aubrey came. First, Lady Roads, wife of the sovereign vendor of baseness in print. Honor had found her out since the day when she brought angry blood to June’s cheeks on the Anthons’ lawn. It had not made her impractical. “I had to come, dear,” she said; she had been a small actress, and called people dears; “to beg a thing of you.”

“Tell me.” In spite of the “dear” June thawed to the distress in the voice.

“You darling! But if it’s the slightest trouble you’ll send me straight home?—promise. It’s this—*do* you think you’ll be seeing that dear Mr. Browne who was with you—three weeks ago, is it?”

“He’s coming to-day. Not to stay here. At the farm. You don’t know Brunt Farm?” June rose; she wanted to turn her face away for a moment. She went to the open door-window. “It’s down there,” she said, pointing across bleaching stubble to where a low roof basked in a sun-filled hollow.

“And then he’ll be coming here. *Might* I come in,

some time when he's here, just to explain how wretched my poor George is for having flown out the way he did—oh, you don't know, of course?"

June remembered. Roads had coveted Aubrey for a recruit to the gainful business of rotting England's brain and heart towards their fall. June hearkened patiently.

"It was at dear Lady Anthon's. I thought you must really have heard—George's voice does penetrate so; not when he's arguing—George never argues; he knows too well what people are; he only told Mr. Browne the plain truth, because he thought he could speak to him like a father—that he was just a young man, with the world to face still."

"Was he not?"

"Then? Yes, of course. But George hadn't a notion that Mr. Browne was going to come off, the way he has done, with those letters that made people send all the money, and now this play that everybody is talking about?"

"Are they?" It was not straightforward of June. She knew. But she could not help angling for even the poorest take of the delicious praise.

"My dear, it's the boomiest boom. Even the stupid old critics all say it's good—that's the queer thing—and yet it's quite simple; George says that nobody else would dare write that way, for fear of not seeming to know enough. George and I saw it last night. He almost cried in the box."

"Poor Mr. Browne! At his comedy?"

"No, but it hurt George so, not to be friends with a person like that, when he might have been. 'Why, he's a natural force,' George kept on saying, 'same as springs that table waters come from. He's like a mint running wild,' George said; 'it's Nature, fair broke loose and spouting money, like the oil-wells.' George does love to be at peace with Nature—just as if we were still quite poor, he's so conscientious. Oh!"

That moving stillness, the End House butler, manifesting itself near her elbow, startled the pleading wife. Her own butler, the "Oh!" seemed to say, was less still. Dr. Schweinfurth had called, the still butler said. He would not come in yet; he had gone to the library; there were a note and a parcel left for him there by Mr. Hathersage.

June smiled. The old friend was free of the house. "You know him?" she asked Lady Roads.

"The man who knows all about the little, short African savages?"

"Yes. He has torn himself from them now, for a year, to discover England."

Then Aubrey came. June's back was turned to the door, but she knew he was there, before she had seen him or heard the name, whether it was that he pressed through the air in a way that no one else had, so that a ripple reached her which only he could have shaped, or whether his tread alone was, like a voice, wholly personal.

There was a soft but full light in the room, not like the murk of London yesterday, where one could only

make out the main signals run up in another's face by the moment's quickened blood or a thrilled nerve; here all the book of expression lay open. And in June it had been filled; Aubrey saw she had grown in a way that made the petulant girl of the Roc-à-Voir dining-room seem a thing crude, like green fruit, to remember. Her whole face had attained a more serene oval; every fretful or querulous line that had drawn it before must have let itself go. Yet her forehead had pensiveness, not corrugative, but a benign glow; not a shadow, and yet it foreshadowed; he had not imagined till then how much of the maiden mind may be already wedded, from when it is pledged, and mothering to-morrow's world.

She was transparent, plane behind plane, far into the deep place, behind her eyes, from which her soul ran to embrace him; over that, not wholly hiding it, played the hostess' frank kindness, done with a will—he might have been some guest so little cared for that courtesy, fearing to fail, filled the cup till it spilt. And over all that, in its turn, there sparkled, for him only to see, her affection's amusement to find itself flaunting that mask.

She said soon, "May I leave you two people a moment? Lady Roads has a mission to you," she smiled to Aubrey, "and I a little one to Dr. Schweinfurth. My father has left a gift for him."

Then she was gone, and the air flat, and the baronet's lady was losing no time. "Do tell me, now, just what it's like, to wake up one morning and find

yourself famous?" And then, without pausing an instant, "Sir George was so glad."

"Glad?" Aubrey echoed inanely, his eyes on the crack of the door, shamelessly, like a turned-out collie's.

"So glad—and I *know* you would *want* to be just, and I can't bear to see my poor darling suffer, the way he was doing last night, when they cheered your play so—the whole house was furious, I heard, the first night, because you weren't there. It was his dread, you know, lest he had wronged a great soul. There's something so *fine* about George—he's so utterly frank and good in that way—so ready always to say 'I was wrong,' don't you know, like the Prayer Book—'erréd and been deceived.' You believe it, don't you?—if he could ever have dreamt what last night would be like, or how splendid your letters would be, in that dreadful paper, he couldn't have said one word that could ever wound you. You do believe that?"

He heard idly, as people look, from a blurring distance, at something that might be curious if it were near. "Oh, yes, I do."

"Thank you, so much." She rambled on, ending, "And you're friends with George? You'll come—?"

"Ah!" He had jumped up. Dr. Schweinfurth came, radiant. Big, blond and mild, he advanced with effulgent moist eyes, one hand holding June's with a gesture of unexhausted or still incompletely expressed affection or thanks, the other holding a longish, slim

case of fine rosewood, lidded with plate glass and brassy with purposeful locks like a jewel casket's. Under his beard his lips moved each time he gave the box a look of devotion. He simmered with rapture; in happy, warm words it lipped over: "Your father's liberal knowledge;" "his great intelligence;" "he understands"—the Teuton's last, vastest eulogy.

June introduced them all, playfully puffing Aubrey—"our new British dramatist." She was impelled to say the last things that she would have said if he were yet her known lover.

"Dramatist? So?" The German's eyes, willing to be polite, but unable, wavered between Aubrey's face and the rosewood.

June laughed and gave in to the child in the big man. She looked at the box, to let him look too. "My father was given it," June said, "by Major Legard—you know Major Legard?"

"Know Legard! Why, we were there—at the same time—in Africa."

"Oh, then you *would* meet, of course," Lady Roads babbled in, meaning no irony.

"Legard," Schweinfurth tolled momentarily, "has—Legard *had*," he amended, giving a jubilant tap on the case's glass lid, "three of what nobody else in Europe or Asia has. As for America, I cannot say. Legard had three of the genuine, perfect war-arrows used by the Malantu, with all the poison on. The Malantu—you know about them?" His eye ranged the company.

"I am so sorry, I fear I don't," June said, for them all.

"The tribe was—the glory is gone, but it was—the one fighting race in all the unspoiled part of Africa, that had the two *summa bona* of primitive life together—good, thin tips of steel for its arrows, and good, strong, quick poison to dip them in—poison to kill, at the very worst, in an hour, often in only a half, and to paralyze sooner, first the limbs, then the body, last the brain also. At that stage of civilization, what a thing for a people! How they got the steel—that is one of the wonders. And now Legard has given your father one of the only three arrows! Love, indeed, beyond love of brothers, when men make such gifts. And your father has given it me!"

He opened the case with musing tenderness, took out the minute dart and held up its delicate tip. "Perfect!" he almost maundered. "Look at the poisonous glaze, aqueous, turbid a little, as on a good Persian vase. One tear in the skin, one prick, and—man is but a shadow—do not waste your half hour in seeing the doctor. Myths there have been, of old demi-gods, that could throw off the poison. Myth is good, but, for proof, the doctors have tried, first the poison and then all the antidotes in the world, upon great dogs, baboons, pigs, every beast most correspondent to man. One, at last, by an accident, on himself. Useless! They nothing could."

His eyes doted awhile on the tiny winged death. Sir Bors might have looked at the Holy Grail so,

Aubrey thought. Then, detaching his eyes, the great man said to June, "I am glad I have come."

She laughed affectionately. Lady Roads held her breath till the case closed again; the released air escaped in a little gasp, unaffected for once.

"It is rather awful, isn't it?" June said, in extenuation of those flinching nerves. Her own had not winced.

But Lady Roads was real no longer than she was afraid. "So awful!" she prattled, making her voice pretty again, "and yet the poor things had to do what they could. Such a noble epitaph that, I do think—'He did what he could'; I've always thought it was what I should like for dear George. Well, I must rush. Good-by, Dr. Schweinfurth; I *have* been so much interested. Good-by, Mr. Browne, my husband *will* be so glad. I'll write to you. Good-by, dear." June would have been kissed had her prescient dread of it not shed a quick mist of delicate coldness over the parting.

Schweinfurth had stowed his treasure in some vast inner pocket. He probed his coat's outer wall at short intervals, lest the case should have missed the right orifice. June went out with him into the hall when he left. Her voice could be heard, round and full, as they traversed it, then suddenly distant and thin, at the opened front door.

Then it closed; her steps were returning, eager, quickening as she came on. Aubrey had sat down. He jumped up and went to the open door-window and stood looking out, his back half turned to the room;

he did not know why he did that; he had not decided to do it; it was not a chosen step towards some other step after it; but he had done it when June, at his shoulder, called him by name; he had foregone the embrace that was his to take. He turned his head to her, woodenly.

CHAPTER XXIV

"HAMLET. I did love you once.

OPHELIA. Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

HAMLET. You should not have believed me."

Hamlet, Act iii., sc. i.

JUNE had in her hand an unopened letter. She must have picked it up in the hall on her way. When Aubrey held back, her eyes fell to it. "From my Aunt Kate," she said; "from Rathfarnham; the answer to mine." She flicked the closed envelope on to a table, to wait.

Aubrey looked out again, as her eyes rose. "It's good here," he said. Over the undulant hills and used cornlands the brown autumn stillness was shed like a mood. He shammed admiration; it made an excuse for flinching away from the sight of her face, where the lights were a little sunk that her joy had hung out for their festival.

"Is it?" she asked quaintly, refusing to be deceived. She put a light, deprecant touch on his arm. "Tell me," she said, not quite as a mother prompts a child to say out something it has on its mind, nor yet as a child asks its father to tell it about the great world, but still with a trace of the tenderness of the one and the wistfulness of the other.

He turned to her sharply, in fear of softening. "About what?"

"Everything."

"May we go out?"

She stepped into the garden, obedient. There was a lawn under the windows. Flanking the lawn, on one side, like an aisle, with a hedge between, was a plot of flower-beds veined with a maze of pebbled path. Looking over it, southward, a seat of red brick, an Italianate toy, a piece of "taste," was canopied with trailing vines. They had reached it before either spoke, June awaiting an answer, Aubrey holding at bay what had come and treasuring each unruined second.

With a gesture she made him sit there. She sat down, too, with a space between them, both looking out sunwards over the motionless, waiting flowers. Each was a little turned in towards the other.

"Begin," she said, more like the mother now than the boy.

He made a gulping effort and then shied away at the last, and only gave up delayful silence to clutch at delayful speech.

"Oh, I—caught the night mail out from Euston," he pattered; "another night mail west from Dublin—"

"Two nights with no sleep. You poor one."

"Oh, no; I slept."

"You woke early, in that ghastly light—like fainting faces, you said. I know; it discourages; I awoke too. No, I had been awake, thinking; you seemed so indescribably little out there, like a child lost in a desert."

She had not moved on the seat, but her voice and her

eyes had come nearer; like lights and bells of a haven they offered rest. More than that; she was enriched again and ripened; within her some rose of precarious and poignant delight had burst into passionate bloom, its petals aglow in her cheek and their curves on her lips, a beauty that shed every sheathing, to spill round the senses its odor and luster of treasuring tenderness.

What could he do, that had the passion himself of the full, contained vessel of youth? Values were changing, purposes melting, in this rose mist that he swam in. One thing he could hold to—she must not be cheated; she had to be told. But when she should hear? He foresaw her face streaming as if with blood from that blow. Need he hasten her marring? Time, in this yellowing garden, had lost motion. Not a leaf rustled; the sun hung becalmed in still haze; the earth's hastening was over. What was a minute, or more, in that timeless world?

"About Cusheen?" she asked.

"That dreadful place?" he said, merely putting her off to gaze at her as she still was.

"Dreadful?"

He roused from his gazing, a little. He had to find something to say, merely to keep both of the forking roads untaken for one minute more. "Why didn't you tell me about it?" he said, in a voice of forced hardness. For softness would have been one of the roads.

"I didn't know," she pleaded. "Tell *me*."

She almost whispered these words, with a quick

outstretch of her face—some infinitesimal part of an inch, but it seemed to bring her whole body nearer, as though the spirit that flung itself towards his were carrying with it its envelope. Aubrey lost strength for a moment or two; for that time their fate hung uncertain; it fluttered in air like a flake of snow that has not alighted yet, over the ridge of the Andes; still poised between Atlantic and Pacific, the flap of an insect's wing might decide to which of two oceans it shall go. Some breath of a gadding wind makes the great choice for the flake; in Aubrey there stirred the remembrance of June in the Anthons' garden, the devotee wounded. "Tell you what?" he asked, harshly.

"All that you found at Cusheen."

"Oh, I saw women hunting potatoes in little patches of mud. They all coughed."

"Yes?" She did not harden at his hard voice. It only moved her, as mothers awaked in the night are moved at feeling sick babies beat and kick at the breast with minute, troubled limbs.

"There were men who scraped weed off the rocks and laid it on flat stones, to cheat seeds into thinking them earth. Good work, good worm's work—you know the big book about earthworms—Darwin's, isn't it? That's Cusheen's history."

"All of it?" There was a silence. Then she said, as a comrade says to a sure comrade who holds back a little thing for an instant, "Don't keep me out of it all. It hurts."

He had no hope but in rollicking hardness now.

"Oh, yes, things hurt; they're for that. I found that out there."

Her hand went out and lit on his arm. "Aubrey," she said most softly, inviting his eyes.

He could double no more. Her challenging love had brought him to bay under the dead wall to which he had known they must come. "No, curse it!" he groaned, "I can't have you touch me," and let his arm fall slack from under her hand.

Even then he had made no choice of a course. What he did could hardly be said to be willed. Falling down the face of a crag, he was grasping, not at the best hold, but at anything. He stood up. "No; sit there," he ordered. Almost behind her he stood, to escape seeing her eyes. "Listen. The thing I found out was—it's no use—my trying to love you."

"You don't?" It was hardly even a wail, for a wail may have life, but this was the very ashes of pain. She seemed to sink into herself and grow small, as the faces of people expiring do, she was so pressed in upon, from without, by mobbing griefs and shames.

"Shall I go?" he asked with some stupid impulse to lie no more than he need, or at least to let silence do the rest of the lying.

"Not yet." She got the words out as soon as, in some dim war which she must be fighting within, she had gained a moment's mastery. Then the war went on.

Unendurable silence; he could not keep it. "Hate me, hate me, hate me!" he prompted her savagely.

"See what a brute! You can't do it yet as you should. You must, when you see."

"No, no, no!" She was heard speaking far off, as people are who, with matters of moment to heed, blow away almost absently any dust-specks of intrusion that settle on them.

"You'll think of forgiving!" he jibed, straining to bind himself over, to cut off retreat. "You do, you people that have religions. Forgive!"

"Wait!" For a little longer she held off from her the things that he said, while she mustered her own battered remnant of will. Then she began: "Aubrey—"

"Still?" he said, at the name.

"Till you go—may I?"

He relaxed guard a little; she seemed to accept; perhaps it was all done now. He even began already to look back as a Cain might do to all the time in which he had not hurt Abel, and see his lost riches shining, a great way off, like some old delight in a book. The brutal lie severed them now, by his act; the flaming sword stood at the gate; he stared at it numbly, thinking, "I made it."

She was speaking. "You are you still, and I I," she began. She looked round and up and he saw in her face a flicker yet of the light he had stamped upon.

He only half hardened again. "No, we're stone dead; I, at least; can't you see? Things that one does may be death, and more than it; they put an end to more than what stops when your body dies and your soul hasn't groveled. Think?"

She rose, her eyes on him; in them the flicker, that Aubrey had thought to quench, was leaping again into flame. "As if I could think! Do a sum, all about you? Count up what's good and bad in you and then, if the bad things are more, give you up! I can't. It's not like that. It's all just an aching awareness of your being you and my wanting you and that I'm nothing without you—no more than a fiddle would be, after everybody was dead."

She spoke like an incarnation of love, unashamed, unafraid, unexacting, unjudging, more self-surrenderingly his, to take and keep, than she ever had been. He might have turned back, even then. But he was distracted. He saw her as men in a falling fort, who are shooting their wives and daughters to keep them from more cruel ends, may look at faces that they have only wounded in trying to kill. Murder's mad lust for completion was frenzied the more by anguished tenderness. "Damn it, I swear I don't love you," he growled; "I swear. Won't that do you? I thought you were proud."

He went on; he forced the brutality wildly, heaping affronts on her, desperately trying to stun her before the sight of her, with the blows falling upon her, could break him. At last she went slack, her body shrinking down on the seat. She did not weep, but looked out lifelessly over the still flowers, as if sick with dull pain.

He stood there, sick too. All the garden was tense with sick pain; the still haze on the hills was the look of a paralyzed animal put to the torture. "Shall I go?" he said, when he could.

She just moved her head ; he went, upon that. In a convex mirror placed at the alley's end he saw her last, a tiny figure of devastation, her face not yet in her hands ; he was shut out from the right to see that.

CHAPTER XXV

“Death will find some way to untie or cut the most Gordian knots of life.”

SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

AT seven that evening supper was on at Brunt Farm, in an antique kitchen, now a kitchen no longer, but prized above parlors by amateurs of the quaint. It was windowless, almost; the fireplace filled a whole wall; the shut nail-studded door of the farm was half the wall opposite. Candlelight made the place snugly cavernous, deepened the sockets of people's eyes and aspired intently up through the quiet air with the straight, striving flame that can bring a few seconds' trance if you gaze at it with a set will like its own. Aubrey tried for that anodyne once, at a moment of silence. He and Schweinfurth were supping alone; Newman was out “to his tea,” as the farmer's wife told them, at Mr. Nick-Ross's.

The name recalled Oxford to Aubrey, his second year there, and a Harrow freshman, a boy like a finely-bred flower, the infantine grace of his urbane face scarcely flecked then, sodden soon afterwards. Aubrey remembered: he noticed that he remembered: parts of him went on, just as they used to. Like one who comes to himself after a fall, his mind moved a little, felt at its limbs, bent a joint here and there, wondering what would still work. Battered with loss,

rolled in the mud of his lying, still he did not want to be broken: his instinct was loyal to life; like a torn tissue in highly vascular flesh, an unquestioning impulse, practical, plodding, strove already to build up again tiny cell upon cell.

Kings may be blest, but the German was glorious. "Like them that dream" did he eat wild duck and the milk pudding of Britain. They were well cooked, there was good claret too, and he was a traveler. "It's good to be here," he said, with a fork upheld tridentwise; nothing at Brunt Farm could revolt him now, not the hill of manure that sloped to the duck-pond and stained it sour brown, nor the stable where John, the laborer, slept in his clothes among the feet of his horses. All is well where your own Holy Grail has appeared: his lay on the far end of the table, beyond the white cloth; his eyes sought it at times, to drink rapture, leaving the meat that perisheth. Aubrey listened, at first as the very sick look out from their beds when a little better, pondering dully on having the use of their reopened eyes. Then he talked; the tongue worked of itself, it was queer how fluently—more than if no blow had fallen. Soon he took or found cues like a host; he chattered along, making a little, or nothing, go a shameless long way; he retailed, for twice what they were worth, little things he had heard, it might be at third hand—how John, in his cups, had once broken a leg and lain between hospital sheets for some weeks in great misery, sleepless till he could get his discharge and flee back to the fouled straw, the crunch of the corn in the mangers, the

breath and sighing of heavy beasts in the night, the stench and the buzzing flies.

"Wise child that knows its own schlummerlied," Schweinfurth would babble back; "'Schlaf, Kindlein, schlaf,' say the flies, and John knoweth their voice as ycur ship-boy in Shakespeare hears the imperious surge saying, 'Hushaby.'" Schweinfurth was maudlin with doating on his own treasure; he spilt his contentment all round him, letting it fall, like the warmth of a sun, on the bad and the good.

Aubrey could see what he himself was to this beatified soul—some little figure intent on trifles, its fugitive interests, its chatter of Johns and stable flies; a small-talker, living for transiencies, he had to be humored; small beer must be served out to keep him in play, in harmless play, on the outer steps of the door of the mansion of the intelligent. Aubrey could see it all with a new clearness, frigid, transparent, incredible, like an old view seen again through strangely washed air on a rare, sunless evening after rain. It would have made him drunk once, with delight; now he was cold, and that was strangest of all; not anguished, but just cold, with opened eyes. He wondered, was it like that to be old—to see so much more and mind it so little; to find your old impediments gone, and nothing beyond them? He set his voice going again. It ran on, undismayed by any thrill of wonder, as if all talk were of things he had long ago seen out to their ends. "I that used to be shy as a sheep!" he thought; speech, that used to come in short spurts, precarious rushes, apt to be checked, he could

not tell when, by a suddenly collaring sense of the staggering moment of what he was speaking about—speech was effortless now, and his own voice sounded to him like bells tinkling outside; the airy, shrewd stuff that he gave off was heard by himself as if it came from old colonels or dowagers. And people had tried to describe calamities! Could they have ever felt them? Or was he somehow deficient? No tempest of grief was raging in him; he could not say that grief gnawed him, or that he was stunned. What he was bearing was not like what he had ever read of a man who had lost what he loved, or his honor; his was no taxing pang or high trial or call for sore effort; only an unthrilled, sinister ease; nothing mattered, nothing resisted, no wheel in him all found good rough ground to bite on; the thing that was gone was the push of the water back on the oar, the exacting, enchanting challenge of hardness and hazard in all the things that had ever had to be done.

They were now on Nick-Ross; mention of Newman had led to him. Nick-Ross should have been here, Aubrey vowed, to meet Schweinfurth. Yes, he remembered; Nick-Ross was just off to East Africa.

“He also? Exploring?”

“Only big game, I’m afraid. He’s a soldier, or was.”

Schweinfurth pondered. He sought the connection. “A soldier, then, not of profession? A voluntary?”

“No, no! In the Grenadier Guards.”

Schweinfurth wondered again till Aubrey brought a seeming solution. “He’s out of them now.”

"So?" The German's brow cleared. "In your army, too, is no room for idlers?"

"Cashiered? Dear no. Nick-Ross came into his kingdom, his thirty thousand acres. His father had died. And so farewell, as your German national poet, your Shakespeare, says, to the great wars and the tented field."

"He is how old?"

"Say, twenty-five."

"And after?"

"He'll marry; be serious; perhaps hunt a pack of his own; tell stories of camp and court after dinner—he was a Queen's page once."

"Before being a soldier?" Schweinfurth was attending.

"Yes. When a boy."

"It is a parallel!" Schweinfurth's eyes sparkled. He rose. "May I read you five words only, out of my book? A book not yet out. On the Malantu." He made for the door. Then he remembered. "You will keep guard?" He nodded his head towards the arrow and hastened out.

Aubrey sat still for a moment and then went to the arrow, took it out of the case and looked at it narrowly. No thrill there, either; the tiny passport to Lethe, easy and sure as Cleopatra's asp, stirred nothing in him. He put it down listlessly. Schweinfurth was back; he came in engrossed in a roll of proofs; he was a man of successive absorptions, each of them absolute. Smoothing a long slip of paper out, he read aloud with zest:—

“ ‘The Malantu. The men of the ruling class serve as pages in youth. From eighteen to twenty-five they are classed as Elmorans, or warriors. After that age they marry, settle down, and live on their lands, which are tilled for them by villains or landless churls. The Elmorans spend the rest of their lives in hunting. They live chiefly on meat, they do not drink water, and it is a point of honor with them not to work.’ ” The reader looked up, happy. “A true analogy, survival perhaps. I will go and make a note.” The new interest engaged the whole man; as he went out he did not so much as look at the arrow, his cynosure of ten minutes ago, left lying exposed by the listless Aubrey, nor hear two nearing sounds, in the outer darkness—the brisk tap, tap of Newman’s two sticks as he stumped up the flagged garden-path, and the lilt of a music-hall song of the day, knowing, leering and cruel:

“They may wriggle, they may struggle, but I’ve got ’em in my eye—”

The tune gave a stagger, was lost for a few bars, and then shambled on—

“—I shall have ’em by and by.”

The tapping stopped; in the stillness Aubrey could hear a hand wandering, exploring, over the outside of the door, seeking the latch. Holding his breath, Aubrey listened, and sickening thoughts came. Cruel, gross hand, some time it might wander like that, in the dark, besotted, cunning, deflowering, greedy, over

the face of a bride, over—oh, hell! Imagination, too, had turned fluent; it raced, to no good, like a screw out of water; its foul visions were physical, full, circumstantial; nothing would stop them—except, perhaps, action. He jumped up and opened the door.

Newman stood black against a young moonrise, a figure precariously planted now that the door, its third prop, was withdrawn. Such was the tea of Nick-Ross. But Newman carried liquor with skill and a will. His tongue was almost itself; when he sat, his legs need not count; the one Bacchic influence not to be mastered was preoccupation, whole-souled and indignant, with a small wrong.

“ ‘Straor’n’ry chap, Nick-Ross!’ ” he opened on it at once. “ Been out to tea with Nick-Ross. Thought I’d ask his advice. Thought Nick was a man of the world. Would you b’lieve it—hadn’t a needle in the whole house? Man o’ th’ world! ”

For a moment or two he scorned and mourned silently. Then, “ *You* got a needle, now?” Aubrey was suddenly asked, as if to give the world one more chance of amending itself.

“ No.”

“ Pin, even? Not a tin pin, mind. Gol’, silver, some presh’s metal?”

“ No.”

Newman stared, at the other’s curtness. “ Can’t be plagued, can’t you, t’help fellow-creature? Oh, you’re all right. Your ship’s come in. What’s human sufferin’ to you now you’re famous and got pots of

money, and boards up with 'House Full' all over the place! No symp'thy, no 'maj'nation—that's what's th' matter 'th you—don't puchself in's place." Newman was fumblingly loosening his left cuff. "What'd *you* say"—he rolled back coat and shirt sleeve, exposing a large "I" tattooed on that forearm—"what'd *you* say to having a blame thing like that on your arm, and you going courting?" Newman's aggrieved tone seemed to put Heaven itself in the dock, with Aubrey. "And just when you're moving the one letter on and wanting a 'J,' next thing in your game."

"Game?"

"Goo' strong un too. Just when you're pressing the beauty, hitch up your cuff a bit, show her the one loved letter, an' blushin'ly own your folly. 'You—that is. Been done two years.' I tell you it fetches 'em—small things like that. Tact—sort o' chivalry. Understan' now?"

"What?" Newman had said "J." "J!"

"That this 'I' has bloomin' well got to turn into a 'J.'"

"How?" It was not a question really; more like an outstretched arm, or raised stick, to keep an alighting vulture off for a moment more from the eyes of one lying disabled.

"How? Grow a tail. Don' tadpoles do it? Drop 'em too, when they're done with; sensible beasts. Something to last a fair fortnight—that's all I want. No more everlasting debentures for me, way these professionals let you in when they tattoo you—fast dyes and every blame hole they prick like the shaft of

a pit. No, a nice drop of ink, a clean needle an'—got s' much's a penknife?"

"No."

Newman drunkenly pondered his way to a chuckling guffaw. "Gorlummy, I might 've borrowed a needle from Miss June herself."

"She!" He had known it was coming and yet had refused to know, or to figure June pestered by bestial solicitations.

Newman stared. "What's wrong with her?"

"Wrong?"

Newman seemed quite anxious. "Looks all right, doesn't she? Quite decent people—father's side anyhow? 'Course I know," he added concessively, "she's got her head bunged up with religion—philanthropy, that sort of muck—but it'll come right when a chap puts it straight to her—chap with a right to. Why, it's the making of any woman that's all right at bottom—marriage is." Reassurance came in like a glow with the bracing exercise of shedding this wisdom. Newman's eyes ranged round him complacently. "Lummy, I've got it," he suddenly said, and struggled on to his feet. The razor-bright point of the arrow had caught the agitated gleam of a candle blown askew, perhaps by the breath of this eloquence.

Aubrey watched silently, not choosing between silence and speech, nor feeling that there was a choice. He looked on as you look at history when it is written, at some old working of fate, or the linked processes of suns, far out of your governance.

"Kim up." Newman lifted the arrow. "Whatever dam surgeon has been in the place? Praise be! 'Sprov'dence; same old Godspov'dence. Ram in the bushes f'r Abr'am; food for young ravens; catering done for sparrows; lancets free f'r any one wants 'em." He held the steel to the light with a tipsy aping of circumspection and once more certified "'Sprov'dence."

Newman had often said to friends, "When I see a thing has got to be done, I do it." Laying the arrow down on the table, its point punctiliously clear of all possible dirt, the man of action took off his coat and turned back his left sleeve, right to the elbow.

The "I" stood out monumental, blue-black on the white expanse of the plump cripple's womanish arm. To Newman himself, or the maundering liquor in him, the letter seemed, as monuments do, to spring half-recollections that had to be paused for and made clear and whole. "Ivy—that's it. Rum little girl, Ivy; long hair down her back. I was at Harrow then. Ivy—a rum little beast—she went it blind afterwards, somebody told me. They do."

"With a start," Aubrey let go his held breath enough to put in; his eyes had ceased from even the common blinking of nature; they had to miss nothing now.

Newman had picked up the arrow. He maundered on, with it upheld in his right hand, his eyes still on the "I," the remembrancer. "Weird bit of luck—it did twice. 'Sprov'dence again. Ida—rotten name Ida. Had her to mind some roses I grew in a little

garden at Kidlington—little house in the garden, of course—my last year at Oxford—‘Ga-rrr-er ye roses while ye may’—decentish song she’d sing in the evenings—Midsu-rr-er evenings—moths coming blundering in at th’ window, butting at everything. Silly rot, really. Tebb—remember Tebb?—man we called Splosh—took on the small holding afterwards—roses and Ida—everything. All silly rot, if y’ask me. Gem-married and put down the tandem, that’s what I say; go about ‘n a carriage all over cushions an’ tell the man drive you dam slow, and a little brandy on the front seat, case ‘v acc’dent.”

Tongue and limbs shared a finite measure of soberness; they took turns at its use. As Newman’s voice trailed away into drivel, his right hand took a good grasp of the arrow. Pen-like, it impended over the “I.”

“Ink ready?” said Newman. “Oh, blast the cuff!” It had slipped down again till it half hid the letter. “Prop it up, will you?” He held out the arm.

“No.” The reply was instant; it was not willed or chosen; Aubrey himself wondered at it and at the hoarse voice; the whole inside of his mouth must be dry; he must have been gaping a long time at the drift that was carrying this beast to extinction.

“Manners, m’young friend, manners,” Newman corrected blandly.

Aubrey had wet his tongue now. “Put it down,” he commanded roughly.

Newman mimicked a nurse who must make a rude

child say its "Please." "Pl . . ., pl . . .," he prompted.

"Put it down, blast you." Aubrey rose, furious and red, he could not tell why. He wished Newman dead; vermin ought to be dead; it was unreason to keep them crawling about and stinking and stinging; it was not fair to people; it was not loyal to June, whom this pest was to plague. But it was like lust; the impulse bore down all reason. He jumped up and stood over Newman, bullying.

Newman was not a coward. And he was drunk. He shrugged, tucked up the sleeve unhelped, and addressed himself to the work. The arrow's point hovered over the "I," picking its first place to puncture the skin. It had picked, but not touched it, when Aubrey reached down, caught hold of the arrow between Newman's hand and the tip, and snatched it away. But not easily. At the assault Newman's fingers had tightened their grip; the smooth shaft had slipped through Aubrey's hand till the barb checked the slipping. The barb pierced the edge of his clenched palm and tore its way through skin and flesh as he dragged.

Aubrey looked at the tear, with his rage suddenly gone. He must try to comprehend quickly, quickly; that was all he could feel; he must comprehend the things to be done in the hour at most, half hour perhaps, that could now be heard running down headlong in hurrying, creaking ticks of the farmer's cheap clock. Had the clock bolted? Oh, no, of course, it was his head that he had to keep.

Newman was spluttering, outraged. He sought an oath big enough. "Well, I *am*—"

"You are. You'd not be if this—" Aubrey held out the arrow in his whole hand. Some menial faculty in him came to his mind's kitchen door to keep Newman in play.

"You don't mean—!" Newman gaped at the arrow, his pink face turning to tallow.

"Poison: good, quick stuff—an hour or so."

"By God, what a let off! Hullo, though, it's run into you. Suck it, man. I'll drive like hell for a doctor."

"No. He'd make the right faces—that's all—and use up the time."

Newman calmed. "What made you do it?" he asked.

"The deuce knows." Aubrey had suddenly put himself into motion, as if a thought that changed much had occurred. He had let the arrow fall on the table, had run for his boots and was head down, dragging one on.

"If you'd told me—" The self-exculpatory impulse was growing and groping in Newman. "You just swore and grabbed at it."

"Yes, yes; most hasty," said Aubrey, knotting the last lace. The words meant, "Oh, don't bother. Take what you want." "Good-night!" he called back from the door, more friendlyly.

"Going out! Where the—?"

"Good-night!"

The click of the gate at the garden's end followed

quick. The fellow was running. Newman flopped into a chair, bewildered. "'Straor'nary chap," he mused quite aloud.

The door was flung open next moment, and Browne plunged in, breathless. "Forgot the blamed thing," he panted. The arrow still lay on the table; he hurried it into its case, turned the key and threw the key over to Newman. "Give it the German," said Browne; "the beastly thing's his. It may be spoilt—tell him I'm sorry—I can't wait."

He bolted out into the night again. Newman, who had half risen, collapsed again into his chair. "Mos' 'straor'n'ry chap," he repeated, "I ever saw in my life."

CHAPTER XXVI

“Has this been thus before?

And shall not thus time's eddying flight

Still with our lives our love restore

In death's despite,

And day and night yield one delight once more?”

D. G. ROSSETTI.

FROM the hole where the farm lay the lane ran nearly level awhile; then it made the rest of the rise in one sharp slope; from its top to the End House all would be easy. Aubrey ran hard; the false start had wasted a minute or more. He planned hard, as he ran; he would rush the slope, lest there should be any steepness left when his legs began to give; on the flat he might get along, even then, somehow.

As the lane rose it cut into gravel and sand—lane and watercourse too, for three centuries' traffic and rain. Over his head he saw on each side bare roots of the hazel hedges that arched the way leafily, turning its sandy trough into a tunnel, dark now, though the moon could be seen caught in a tangle of boughs. He stumbled on, sweating and losing breath; each hundred yards was great gain; five minutes more to the top of the hill; then another five; that would be all. Enchanting, the grip of clenched thighs on a slope, the clip of the knees as they bow to take hold; always enchanting to him, not merely now, when he might make

too much of what he was losing, as people do. But now, how enchanting! He could feel that, and smell the hazels and sand deeply and slowly, and think about trivial humors—how he would stagger the butler by bursting in, hatless and hot; and yet the whole time his mind was on June, not thinking but just envisioning her, sinking all sequent thought in mere ecstatic, motionless sense of the aspect, melting and kind, that he was again free to call into her face, could he but reach her. Death was coming, but then death was over, too, in a way; passionate life and the passionate love of life, which is life's heart, were astir and warm after that Ice Age of numbness too dead to be even pain.

He was nearly up the hill now; the right and left sky-lines of banked sand were dipping down to him, hoisting the moon up the sky. Six yards more, and the flat stretch would begin. But a strange thing happened. He felt as if his body were not upright, but leant back, at right angles to the lane's slope. Why, he might topple backwards, he carefully thought. He forced his head and shoulders well forward, and instantly fell on his hands and one knee, scraping away cloth and skin. He scrambled up, but nothing would balance now; he had to fall either forward or back. A field gate was ahead on his left, six yards on, the coveted six yards. He made a falling rush at it, threw his arms over the top bar and hung by them rather than stood on his failing feet.

So it was coming, but not sheer disablement yet. His mind was unclouded; more cloudless, perhaps, than ever before; all powers were its, in new strength—

vision and passion and swiftly-building reason—as though at the opened door of endless night the quick spirit bent itself up to show what it might have done yet in the sun. His arms were sound too, and his legs to the knees. Walking was done with, but there was all fours; he dropped to the ground and set off instantly, scuttling on hands and knees, half in the sandy dust and half on the wayside grass where the raw knee flinched less. All the time he was calculating closely; twenty more minutes at this pace should do it; no, say twenty-five, for his legs began to drag like a fly's that have been in the cream. Still, his arms held out well; that was fine; he shuffled on, almost elate, till a wrist gave way and let him down, rolling first on his right side and then on his back in the white dust. He wriggled to rise, but the other arm gave, and both legs. He tried to roll over and over, barrel-like, in the direction he wanted to go, but he found that, even for this, live limbs were needed, to make the trunk turn, and he was a torso now, tied to dead weights.

He lay still in the dust, working it out. Three hundred yards still to the house; two hundred and fifty perhaps. Some one might pass in the moments left. It would be miracle, almost; the hamlets were all asleep; still, it was only just nine, and a moon-flooded night; some child might be ill and a father go that way for the doctor. Some one might pass. But, were it a winged Mercury, could it bring June word in time? And would she come? Oh, yes, she would come; that was safe; she had all the proud generosities. He must be ready if any one passed; he must have his message

framed, and also his means to make a passer believe that he was not drunk or an idiot, to lie in the dirt and bid ladies come to him. That done, he listened and listened, his ears becoming creative and modeling dim shapes of the craved sounds of footsteps and voices out of the chaos of infinitesimal whispers that make up the breath of the earth in its sleep; then back, with a rush, came the thought of his hoarded minutes pouring themselves out to waste, and he was convulsed with another effort to move, like a weakening horse that is lashed again after its stronger struggles to move the cart have all failed. He strained till cramp came and sweat matted his hair and made it feel heavy; drops of sweat crawled on his face and tickled like flies.

But the miracle happened—as if you were starving and wished, without hope, that a gold coin might lie in the mud at your feet—and it lay there. The spasm was over; the ears were again at their post, and lo! while they had been away, sharing the body's agony, sounds had found shape that did not need conjuring—oncoming steps that rustled clear in the dust; and then breathing, shallow and quick; and another rustle, rhythmic and, as he thought, quickening—the rub of two parts of a dress on a woman walking and then walking faster and then running: some country girl, no doubt, scared at her night walk and wanting to get it done. Would she faint when he spoke? To guard against that waste of time he set about crooning, the tuneless best way he could, some words of the first song he could think of:

"Oh, you'll tak' the high road and I'll tak' the low road,
And I'll be in Scotland before you."

He heard her breath stop, her step check; no cry, though; and then she came on unfalteringly. "Good one!" he thought, and hummed away:

"—me and my true love will never meet again
By the bonnie, bonnie banks of Loch Lomond."

She was near; she must see him now; he would speak tranquilly, say he was suddenly ill, beg her to run very fast to the End House, ask to see Miss Hather-sage instantly, tell her—

Held down on his back he saw little but sky and trees; no road at all. The woman came on in shadow at first; she heaved into sight an undelimited whiteness, scaling the dome of his visible world as a white cloud sails up a night sky. Then the moon fell on this cloud, a white shaft on a white face; as she ran to the voice and stooped down to him quickly, all of him that had longed for her coming, his love and regret and pity, cried out her name over and over, embracing it. "Oh, June, June, June!"

On her knees, with one hand under his head and the other pushing back his wet hair, she did not speak words, and yet was not silent; a murmurous haze or audible breath of tenderness shed itself on him. Helplessness made him, for that moment, hers utterly; she had a rending joy like a mother whose wild son is carried home to her ill and as full of needs again as the infant she once nursed. She could not even ask anything yet; she only sat in the dust with his head in

her lap, between her hands, pouring about him that mist of caressing low sound.

"I was lying," he said; "I do love you."

"Ah!" she said, strangely, as if she had known.

"I kept loving you more and more, all that time I was lying."

"Dear, kind one."

"We had been caught in a trap; we had walked right into it; we couldn't know; but it's all right now; it's all right."

"Yes, yes!" she broke out in triumph.

"I thought about ways to get us both out of the trap, together—to break the thing. There wasn't one that I could see anywhere. Then I went mad and tried just to cut you out of it, hacking you like a brute, anyhow!"

"No, no!"

"Yes. I can't tell you it all—"

"I know it all."

"You?"

"My dear love, my cousin." The shunned word came, playful and tender. He took it in dazedly, trying to grasp the changed world that it made. The dead wall was down; it had never been there; he had lost her for nothing; he had played traitor for nothing; in his crazed fume at the farm he had thrown away life for a sulker's whim of not saying a plain word in time. Oh, long list of his blindnesses!

June was speaking. "It was that letter—my Aunt Kate's. I opened it when you were gone. Then I guessed—no, I had a faint, sneaking hope—that this

might be why you were giving me up—that you wanted to let me off, oh, my dear blind one! Wasn't I shameless?—you'd kicked me away, and I let myself cling to your boots, in my thoughts. But I couldn't go to you and throw myself at you and say, 'I'm your cousin, I know, but still will you take me?' I wasn't trying to see you. I couldn't stay in—that was all. I wanted to look at the house where you were, from a little way off—there are trees on a knoll—I could not have been seen, and then I'd have stolen away. And there were you, coming to me, all the time, and it's all right in the end." She was exalted; she threw up her head to shake back a tress and he caught in her moon-filled eyes a light wild and yet steadfast, a fit fire-signal of embarkation on love the adventure, the taxer of staunchness, the violent rearranger of lives. So must his mother have looked, on that other night.

She found earth again. "What a brute I am. You're ill—you're hurt in some dreadful way—oh, what is it?—and I doing nothing. I'll run, I'll bring people to carry you." She moved, to rise.

He pressed his head down on her lap detainingly. "Darling, I'm dying," he said, sorrowfully, feeling it hard to have no arms to hold her in, while the words fell.

She did not cry out, or flinch. All he felt was a tightened clasp of her hands under and over his head, as if they had felt it slipping away. She had contracted a little, the whole of her body, and then become taut, as does an attacked army whose outposts draw in and stand fast.

He turned his head this way and that between her hands, so as to rub against them softly, a kind of embrace. "A fluke," he said, "a scratch, an accident at the farm with that arrow."

"You didn't—!"

"No, no. I've loved living—even then? You understand? Newman had it. I snatched it away in a temper and so I got scratched."

"Where? Show me, quickly."

He could not point to it; the outworks of life were all down; only the captaining brain, cut off and invested, held out still in its citadel. "Don't look for it, June; the poison's gone far from it now; it may be flowing into my brain or my heart; let us love out our minutes." He mustered the scattered parts of a thought. "You didn't think of me the way the priest did?"

"Oh, no, no."

"I was afraid. I thought of you at that party—the way you looked when Mrs. Roads spoke."

"I was angry—I wasn't religious. I had been shaken and doubting for ever so long. It made me all the more furious when people who didn't believe were ribald or pert—it's so holy and lovely whenever any one does believe anything really, and stands by it. Sometimes I wavered back, when I was tired or weak. That morning I wrote to you—"

"Yes, my dear, dear." He did not need to recall the words of her letter: "I prayed to Mary, Mother of God." They had burnt into him. Without his misreading of them he might not have blundered into all

this. "You wouldn't have minded the shame?" he asked. "Cousin and wife of the son of a runaway priest."

"*And* at Brabburn?" She tenderly mocked.

Some pang traversed his body, enforcing a moment of silence and closed eyes. She bent down, raising his head a little. They stayed so, till her lips felt his eyelashes lifting.

"You kissed me," he murmured, musing in paradise.

"You fainted? You are in pain?"

"Pain! No! You kissed me. Isn't the mill somewhere here?" The mind, uneasy in its shaken house, began to go hither and thither.

"There! There!" She lifted his head and pointed.

From the dark swell of the Hurtwood the sails rose, dark too, against a sky white with strewn stars; the ledge where they had first kissed was drawn black and sharp on that ground. He was shaken; he found dying hard, and she lost hold of her voice and tears and had to be silent above his head, hiding a face crumpled like a child's with pain, while the defrauded love in each of them beat, alone and in secret, on the unhearing bars of their cage.

So they remained, held apart by the resolution of each not to break the strength of the other, till Aubrey had suffered the whole of conscious death, to the last sting it can plant in life-loving tissue. He had sunk choking slowly through gray water that sang in the ear and pressed in on the mouth and darkened through dusk into night over his upturned eyes. Then all that

had fought and striven in him gave up, and rest came on and on; it called, it invited, like a made bed after nights of lying awake in day clothes; but no, it had not a form, it was a glow, a suffusion, a luminousness that brightened and spread; it was widening and paling round him, but chiefly above, and he was a bubble of air rising through gray water slowly, without effort or will of his own, merely watching the light grow and grow overhead as he drew to the surface and broke like a bubble there; eyelids broke open, and June's face was there, bent over the waters; it filled his emerging eyes.

She had closed them, for she, too, had suffered his death and had thought, as she drew those curtains, could there be any mirrors so eager, ever again? And now they were open; they took the light; they filled themselves with her. She knew, without knowing how, that he had come back with his life; the gleam of the salvaged treasure was in his face; and he knew too, for the news shone in hers even before he felt in his limbs the tingling *reveillé* of the drugged troops of life. Had he sweated the mortal drop out of his veins? Had its lethal virtue gone stale? Or had some freak of luck spiced his blood with its antidote? Or—but what did it matter? He looked up at June. They had come through, unbroken; they had not squared fate; they had each kept pride clean, to bring to the other. And no poor life was ahead; romance had begun it; romance it would be; not the old fanfaronnading romance of the cheering lists and the sun on the plumes—the trumpeting boy's paradise and the unassayed girl's, but romance strung afresh to the pitch of the

grown strength of women and men, even of woman-and-man, the unmained unit, the two-chambered heart of the race, the twin power-house of high desire and will; the romance of new, harder, unpraised feats to do, of dark places to traverse without any fairy lamp in the hand, of glamourless risks to affront, of all the flintier flints that there were for steelier steel to strike the old fire from.

She did not speak, nor did he, under that first rush and oppression of instant and of waiting happiness. Words must have been made by man for telling about quite small delights only, and lighting the dim spaces between people who did not know how to be friends; they might, with their poorness, have wronged that morning flame of life and joy, or blurred the vision that each lover had gained of the other's completing soul.

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